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SERMONS

ON SEVERAL

SUBJECTS *and* OCCASIONS,

By the most Reverend

Dr. *JOHN TILLOTSON*,

LATE

Lord Archbishop of *Canterbury*.

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M DCC XLII.

SERMON LI.

Of the education of children.

PROV. xxii. 6.

Train up a child in the way he ſhould go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.

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I Have on purpoſe choſen this text for the ſubject of a preparatory diſcourſe in order to the reviving of that ſo ſhamefully neglected, and yet moſt uſeful and neceſſary duty of catechiſing children and young perſons: But I ſhall extend it to the conſideration of the education of children in general, as a matter of the greateſt conſequence both to religion and the publick welfare.

For we who are the miniſters of GOD ought not only to inſtruct thoſe who are committed to our charge in the common duties of chriſtianity, ſuch as belong to all chriſtians, but likewiſe in all the particular duties which the ſeveral relations in which they ſtand to one another do reſpectively require and call for from them.

And amongſt all theſe I know none that is of greater concernment to religion and to the good order of the world, than the careful education of children. And there is hardly any thing that is more difficult, and which requires a more prudent

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and diligent and conſtant application of our beſt care and endeavour.

It is a known ſaying of Melancthon that there are three things which are extremely difficult, *parturire*, *docere*, *regere*; "to bear and bring forth children, "to inſtruct and bring them up to be men, and to "govern them when they arrive at man's eſtate." The inſtruction and good education of children is none of the leaſt difficult of theſe. For to do it to the beſt advantage does not only require great ſagacity to diſcern their particular diſpoſition and temper, but great diſcretion to deal with them and manage them, and likewiſe continual care and diligent attendance to form them by degrees to religion and virtue.

It requires great wiſdom and induſtry to advance a conſiderable eſtate, much art and contrivance and pains to raiſe a great and regular building: But the greateſt and nobleſt work in the world, and an effect of the greateſt prudence and care, is to rear and build up a Man, and to form and faſhion him to piety, and juſtice, and temperance, and all kind of honeſt and worthy actions. Now the foundations of this great work are to be carefully laid in the tender years of children, that it may riſe and grow up with them; according to the advice of the wiſe man here in the text, "Train up a child in the "way he ſhould go, and when he is old he will not "depart from it."

In which words are contained theſe two things.

Firſt, the duty of parents and inſtructors of children, "Train up a child, *&c.*" By childhood here I underſtand the age of perſons from their birth, but

but more eſpecially from their firſt capacity of inſtruction till they arrive at the ſtate and age which next ſucceeds childhood, and which we call youth; and which is the proper ſeaſon for confirmation. For when children have been well catechized and inſtructed in religion, then is the fitteſt time for them to take upon themſelves and in their own perſons to confirm that ſolemn vow which by their ſureties they made at their baptiſm.

"Train up a child in the way he ſhould go," that is, in the courſe of life that he ought to lead; inſtruct him carefully in the knowledge and practice of his whole duty to GOD and men, which he ought to obſerve and perform all the days of his life.

Secondly, here is the conſequent fruit and benefit of good education: "And when he is old he "will not depart from it." This we are to underſtand according to the moral probability of things: Not as if this happy effect did always and infallibly follow upon the good education of a child, but that this very frequently is, and may probably be preſumed and hoped to be the fruit and effect of a pious and prudent education. Solomon means that from the very nature of the thing this is the moſt hopeful and likely way to train up a child to be a good man. For as Ariſtotle truly obſerves, "Moral ſayings and proverbial ſpeeches are to be un- "ſtood only ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ, that is, to be uſually and "for the moſt part true." And though there may be ſeveral exceptions made, and inſtances given to the contrary, yet this doth not infringe the general truth of them: But if in frequent and common ex-

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perience they be found true, this is all the truth that is expected in them, becauſe it is all that was intended by them.

And of this nature is this aphoriſm or proverb of Solomon in the text; and ſo likewiſe are moſt of the wiſe ſayings of this book of the Proverbs, as alſo of Eccleſiaſtes: And we do greatly miſtake the deſign and meaning of them whenever we go about to exact them to a more ſtrict and rigorous truth, and ſhall upon due conſideration find it impoſſible to bring them to it.

So that the true meaning of the text may be fully compriſed in the following propoſition.

"That the careful, and prudent, and religious "education of children hath for the moſt part a "very good influence upon the whole courſe of "their lives."

In the handling of this argument I deſign by God's aſſiſtance, to reduce my diſcourſe to theſe five heads.

I. I ſhall ſhew more generally wherein the good education of children doth conſiſt, and ſeverally conſider the principal parts of it.

II. I ſhall give ſome more particular directions for the management of this work in ſuch a way as may be moſt effectual for its end.

III. I ſhall take notice of ſome of the common and more remarkable miſcarriages in the performance of this duty.

IV. I ſhall endeavour to make out the truth of this propoſition, by ſhewing how the good education of children comes to be of ſo great advantage,

and

and to have so powerful and lasting an influence upon their whole lives.

V. And lastly; I shall, by the most powerful arguments I can offer, endeavour to stir up and persuade those whose duty this is, to discharge it with great care and conscience.

I. I shall shew more generally wherein the good education of children doth consist, and severally consider the principal parts of it. And under this head I shall comprehend promiscuously the duty of parents, and, in case of their death, of guardians; and of godfathers and godmothers; though this for the most part signifies very little more than a pious and charitable care and concernment for them, because the children for whom they are sureties are seldom under their power: And the duty likewise of those who are the teachers and instructors of them: And the duty also of masters of families towards servants in their childhood and younger years: And lastly the duty of ministers, under whose parochial care and inspection children are as members of the families committed to their charge: I say, under this head I shall comprehend the duties of these respectively, according to the several obligations which lie upon each of them in their several relations to them. And I shall reduce them to these eight particulars, as the principal parts wherein the education of children doth consist.

First, in the tender and careful nursing of them.

Secondly, in bringing them up to be baptized and admitted members of CHRIST's church, at the times appointed or accustomed in the national church of which the parents are members.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, in a due care to inform and inſtruct them in the whole compaſs of their duty to God and their neighbour.

Fourthly, and more eſpecially in a prudent and diligent care to form their lives and manners to religion and virtue.

Fifthly, in giving them good example.

Sixthly, in wiſe reſtraints from that which is evil, by ſeaſonable reproof and correction.

Seventhly, in bringing them to be publickly catechized by the miniſter in order to confirmation.

Eighthly, in bringing them to the biſhop to be ſolemnly confirmed, by their taking upon themſelves the vow which by their ſureties they enter'd into at their baptiſm.

I. In the tender and careful nurſing of children. I mention this firſt, becauſe it is the firſt and moſt natural duty incumbent upon parents towards their children: And this is particularly the duty of mothers. This affection and tenderneſs, nature, which is our ſureſt guide and director, hath implanted in all living creatures towards their young ones: And there cannot be a greater reproach to creatures that are endued with reaſon, than to neglect a duty to which nature directs even the brute creatures by a blind and unthinking inſtinct. So that it is ſuch a duty as cannot be neglected without a downright affront to nature, and from which nothing can excuſe but diſability, or ſickneſs, or the evident danger of the mother, or the interpoſition of the father's authority, or ſome very extraordinary and publick neceſſity.

This

This I foreſee will ſeem a very hard ſaying to nice and delicate mothers, who prefer their own eaſe and pleaſure to the fruit of their own bodies: but whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, I think myſelf obliged to deal plainly in this matter, and to be ſo faithful as to tell them that this is a natural duty; and becauſe it is ſo, of a more neceſſary and indiſpenſible obligation than any poſitive precept of revealed religion; and that the general neglect of it is one of the great and crying ſins of this age and nation; and which, as much as any ſin whatſoever, is evidently a puniſhment to itſelf in the palpable ill effects and conſequences of it: which I ſhall, as briefly as I can, endeavour to repreſent; that if it be poſſible, we may in this firſt point of education, ſo fundamental and neceſſary to the happineſs both of parents and children, and conſequently to the publick good of humane ſociety, be brought to comply with the unerring inſtinct of nature, and with the plain dictate of the common reaſon of mankind, and the general practice of all ages and nations. SERM. LI.

Firſt, the neglect of this duty is a ſort of expoſing of children; eſpecially when it is not done, as very often it is not, with more than ordinary care and choice. It always expoſeth them to manifeſt inconvenience, and ſometimes to great danger; even to that degree as in the conſequence of it is but little better than the laying a child in the ſtreets, and leaving it to the care and compaſſion of a pariſh. There are two very viſible inconveniencies which do commonly attend it.

1ſt, Strange milk, which is very often diſagreeable to the child, and with which the child to be ſure ſucks in

the natural infirmities of the nurſe, together with a great deal of her natural inclinations and irregular paſſions, which many times ſtick by the child for a long time after: and which is worſe than all this, it ſometimes happens that ſome ſecret diſeaſe of the nurſe is conveyed to the child.

2dly, A ſhameful and dangerous neglect of the child, eſpecially by ſuch nurſes as make a trade of it; of whom there are great numbers in and about this great city: who, after they have made their firſt and main advantage of the child by the exceſſive, not to ſay extravagant vails, which uſually here in England, above all other places in the world, are given at chriſtnings: and then by the ſtrait allowances which are commonly made afterwards for the nurſing and keeping of the child, are often tempted, not to ſay worſe, to a great neglect of the child; which, if it happen to die for want of due care, ſets the nurſe at liberty to make a new advantage by taking another child.

Nor can it well be otherwiſe expected than that a nurſe, who by this courſe is firſt made to be unnatural to her own child, ſhould have no great care and tenderneſs for a child which is not her own.

I have heard a very ſad obſervation made by thoſe who have had the opportunity to know it, that in ſeveral of the towns and villages about London, where this trade of nurſing children is chiefly driven, hardly one in five of theſe children lives out the year: and this ſurely is a danger which natural affection as well as duty does oblige parents to take all poſſible care to prevent.

Secondly, this courſe doth moſt certainly tend very much to the eſtranging and weakning of natural affection

fection on both ſides; I mean both on the part of the mother and of the child. The pains of nurſing as well as of bearing children doth inſenſibly create a ſtrange tenderneſs of affection and care in the mother. "Can a woman, ſays GOD, forget her ſuck- "ing child, that ſhe ſhould not have compaſſion on "the ſon of her womb?" Can a woman? that is, a mother, not a nurſe; for the ſucking child is ſaid to be the ſon of her womb. GOD ſpeaks of this as a thing next to impoſſible. SERM. LI. Iſa. xlix. 15.

And this likewiſe is a great endearment of the mother to the child: which endearment, when the child is put out, is transferred from the mother to the nurſe, and many times continues to be ſo for a great many years after; yea, and often to that degree as if the nurſe were the true mother, and the true mother a mere ſtranger. So that by this means natural affection muſt be extremely weaken'd; which is great pity, becauſe when it is kept up in its full ſtrength it often proves one of the beſt ſecurities of the duty of a child.

But becauſe this ſevere doctrine will go down but very hardly with a great many, I muſt take the more care to guard it againſt the objections which will be made to it. Thoſe from natural diſability, or ſickneſs; from evident and apparent danger of the mother, or from the interpoſition of the father's authority, or from plain neceſſity; or if there be any other that have an equal reaſon with theſe, I have prevented already by allowing them to be juſt and reaſonable exceptions from the general rule, when they are real, and not made pretences to ſhake off our duty.

But there are beſides theſe, two Objections which indeed are real, but yet ſeem to have too great a weight with thoſe who would fain decline this duty, and are by no means ſufficient to excuſe mothers, no not thoſe of the higheſt rank and quality, from the natural obligation of it. And they are theſe: the manifeſt trouble, and the manifold reſtraints which the careful diſcharge of this duty does unavoidably bring upon thoſe who ſubmit themſelves to it.

1ſt, For the trouble of it, I have only this to ſay, and I think that no more need to be ſaid about it; that no body is diſcharged from any duty by reaſon of the trouble which neceſſarily attends it, and is inſeparable from it; ſince God who made it a duty foreſaw the trouble of it when he made it ſo.

2dly, As to the manifold reſtraints which it lays upon mothers; this will beſt be anſwered by conſidering of what nature theſe reſtraints are. And they are chiefly in theſe and the like inſtances. This duty reſtrains mothers from ſpending their morning and their money in curious and coſtly dreſſing; from miſpending the reſt of the day in formal and for the moſt part impertinent viſits, and in ſeeing and hearing plays, many of which are neither fit to be ſeen or heard by modeſt perſons and thoſe who pretend to religion and virtue; as I hope all chriſtians do, eſpecially perſons of higher rank and quality: and it reſtrains them likewiſe from trifling away a great part of the night in gaming, and in revelling till paſt midnight, I am loth to ſay how much.

Theſe are thoſe terrible reſtraints which this natural duty, of mothers nurſing their children, lays upon them.

them. Now I cannot but think all theſe to be very happy reſtraints: happy ſurely for the child; and in many reſpects happy for the father, and for the whole family, which by this means will be kept in much better order: but happieſt of all for the mother, who does herein not only diſcharge a great and neceſſary duty, but is hereby alſo hinder'd from running into many great faults, which before they will be forgiven muſt coſt her a deep contrition, and a very bitter repentance. SERM. LI.

Perhaps I may have gone further in this unuſual argument, than will pleaſe the preſent age: but I hope poſterity will be ſo wiſe as to conſider it and lay it to heart. For I am greatly afraid that the world will never be much better till this great fault be mended. I proceed to the next particular wherein the good education of children doth conſiſt, namely,

II. In bringing them to be baptized and admitted members of CHRIST's church, at the times appointed or accuſtomed in the national church of which the parents are members. I mean, to bring them to the church to be there publickly initiated, and ſolemnly admitted by baptiſm. And this the rules of the church of England do ſtrictly enjoin, unleſs the child be in danger of death; and in that caſe only it is allowed to adminiſter baptiſm privately, and in a ſummary way without performing the whole office: but then if the child live, it is ordered that it ſhall be brought to the church, where the remainder of the office is to be ſolemnly performed.

I know that of late years, ſince our unhappy confuſions, this ſacrament hath very frequently been adminiſtred

miniſtred in private: and miniſters have been in a manner, and to avoid the greater miſchief of ſeparation, neceſſitated to comply with the obſtinacy of the greater and more powerful of their pariſhioners; who for their eaſe, or humour, or for the convenience of a pompous chriſtening, will either have their children baptized at home by their miniſter; or if he refuſe, will get ſome other miniſter to do it; which is very irregular.

Now I would intreat ſuch perſons calmly to conſider how contrary to reaſon, and to the plain deſign of the inſtitution of this ſacrament, this perverſe cuſtom, and their obſtinate reſolution in it, is. For is there any civil ſociety or corporation into which perſons are admitted without ſome kind of ſolemnity? and is the privilege of being admitted members of the chriſtian church, and heirs of the great and glorious promiſes and bleſſings of the new covenant of the goſpel leſs conſiderable, and fit to be conferred with leſs ſolemnity? I ſpeak to chriſtians, and they who are ſo in good earneſt will, without my uſing more words about it, conſider what I ſay in this particular.

III. Another and very neceſſary part of the good education of children is, by degrees to inform and carefully to inſtruct them in the whole compaſs of their duty to GOD, their neighbour, and themſelves: that ſo they may be taught how to behave themſelves in all the ſteps of their life, from their firſt capacity of reaſon till they arrive at the more perfect uſe and exerciſe of that faculty; when, if at firſt they be well inſtructed, they will be better able to direct and govern themſelves afterwards.

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This duty GOD does expreſly and very particularly charge upon his own peculiar people, the people of Iſrael, ſpeaking of the law which he had given them: "Thou ſhalt, ſays he, teach them diligently unto "thy children, and ſhalt talk of them when thou "ſitteſt in thine houſe, and when thou walkeſt by the "way; when thou lieſt down, and when thou riſeſt "up." And this GOD long before promiſed, that Abraham, the father of the faithful, would do; "I know Abraham, ſays he, that he will command "his children and his houſhold after him to keep the "way of the LORD."

Deut. vi. 7.

Gen. xviii. 19.

This work ought to be begun very early, upon the firſt budding and appearance of reaſon and underſtanding in children. So the prophet directs; "Whom ſhall he teach knowledge? whom ſhall he "make to underſtand doctrine? them that are "weaned from the milk, and drawn from the "breaſts: for precept muſt be upon precept, *&c.*

Iſa. xxviii. 9, 10.

To this end we muſt, by ſuch degrees as they are capable, bring them acquainted with GOD and themſelves. And in the firſt place we muſt inform them, that there is ſuch a being as GOD, whom we ought to honour and reverence above all things. And then, that we are all his creatures, and the work of his hands, "that it is he that hath made us, and not we our-"ſelves:" that he continually preſerves us, and gives us all the good things that we enjoy: and therefore we ought to ask every thing of him by prayer, becauſe this is an acknowledgment of our dependence upon him; and to return thanks to him for all that we have and hope for, becauſe this is a juſt and eaſy tribute,

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tribute, and all that we can render to him for his numberleſs favours and benefits.

And after this, they are to be inſtructed more particularly in their duty to God and men, as I ſhall ſhew more fully afterwards. And becauſe fear and hope are the two paſſions which do chiefly ſway and govern humane nature, and the main ſprings and principles of action; therefore children are to be carefully informed that there is a life after death, wherein men ſhall receive from God a mighty and eternal reward, or a terrible and endleſs puniſhment, according as they have done or neglected their duty in this life: that God will love and reward thoſe who do his will and keep his commandments, but will execute a dreadful puniſhment upon the workers of iniquity and the wilful tranſgreſſors of his laws.

And, according as they are capable, they are to be made ſenſible of the great degeneracy and corruption of humane nature, derived to us from the fall and wilful tranſgreſſion of our firſt parents; and of the way of our recovery out of this miſerable eſtate by Jesus Christ; whom God hath ſent in our nature to purchaſe and accompliſh the Redemption and Salvation of mankind, from the captivity of ſin and ſatan, and from the damnation of hell.

IV. The good education of children conſiſts not only in informing their minds in the knowledge of God and their duty, but more eſpecially in endeavouring with the greateſt care and prudence to form their lives and manners to religion and virtue. And this muſt be done by training them up to the exerciſe of the following graces and virtues.

Firſt,

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Firſt, to obedience and modeſty; to diligence and ſincerity; and to tenderneſs and pity, as the general diſpoſitions to religion and virtue.

Secondly, to the good government of their paſſions, and of their tongue; and particularly to ſpeak truth, and to hate lying as a baſe and vile quality; theſe being as it were the foundations of religion and virtue.

Thirdly, to piety and devotion towards GOD; to ſobriety and chaſtity with regard to themſelves; and to juſtice and charity towards all men; as the principal and eſſential parts of religion and virtue.

Firſt, as the general diſpoſitions to religion and virtue, we muſt train them up,

1ſt, To obedience. Parents muſt take great care to maintain their authority over their children; otherwiſe they will neither regard their commands, nor hearken to and follow their inſtructions. If they once get head and grow ſtubborn and diſobedient, there is very little hope of doing any great good upon them.

2dly, To modeſty, which is a fear of ſhame and diſgrace. This diſpoſition, which is proper to children, is a marvellous advantage to all good purpoſes. "They are modeſt, ſays Ariſtotle, who are "afraid to offend, and they are afraid to offend "who are moſt apt to do it;" as children are, becauſe they are very much under the power of their paſſions, without a proportionable ſtrength of reaſon to govern them and keep them under.

Now modeſty is not properly a virtue, but it is a very good ſign of a tractable and towardly diſpoſition, and a great preſervative and ſecurity againſt

1.

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ſin and vice: and thoſe children, who are much under the reſtraint of modeſty, we look upon as moſt hopeful and likely to prove good; whereas immodeſty is a vicious temper broke looſe and got free from all reſtraint: ſo that there is nothing left to keep an impudent perſon from ſin, when fear of ſhame is gone: for ſin will ſoon take poſſeſſion of that perſon whom ſhame hath left. He that is once become ſhameleſs hath proſtituted himſelf. Therefore preſerve this diſpoſition in children as much as is poſſible, as one of the beſt means to preſerve their innocency, and to bring them to goodneſs.

3dly, to diligence, *ſine quâ vir magnus nunquam extitit*; "without which, ſays one, there never "was any great and excellent perſon." When the Roman hiſtorians deſcribe an extraordinary man, this always enters into his character as an eſſential part of it, that he was *incredibili induſtriâ*, *diligentiâ ſingulari*, "of incredible induſtry, of ſingular dili-"gence;" or ſomething to that purpoſe. And indeed a perſon can neither be excellently good, nor extremely bad, without this quality. The devil himſelf could not be ſo bad and michievous as he is, if he were not ſo ſtirring and reſtleſs a ſpirit, and did not compaſs the earth, and "go to and "fro ſeeking whom he may devour."

This is part of the character of Sylla, and Marius, and Catiline, thoſe great diſturbers of the Roman ſtate; as well as of Ceſar and Pompey, who were much greater and better men, but yet gave trouble enough to their country, and at laſt diſſolved the Roman commonwealth by their ambition and contention for ſuperiority: This, I ſay, enters into

into all their characters, that they were of a vigorous and indefatigable ſpirit. So that diligence in it ſelf is neither a virtue nor a vice, but may be applied either way, to good or bad purpoſes; and yet where all other requiſites do concur it is a very proper inſtrument and diſpoſition for virtue.

Therefore train up children to diligence, if ever you deſire they ſhould excel in any kind. "The "diligent hand, ſaith Solomon, maketh rich;" rich in eſtate, rich in knowledge. "Seeſt thou a "man diligent in his buſineſs? as the ſame wiſe man "obſerves, he ſhall ſtand before princes, he ſhall not "ſtand before, mean or obſcure men." And again, "The hand of the diligent ſhall bear rule, but the "ſlothful ſhall be under tribute." Diligence puts almoſt every thing into our power, and will in time make children capable of the beſt and greateſt things.

Prov. x. 4. Prov. xxii. 29. Prov. xii. 24.

Whereas idleneſs is the bane and ruin of children; it is the unbending of their ſpirits, the ruſt of their faculties, and as it were the laying of their minds fallow; not as husbandmen do their lands that they may get new heart and ſtrength, but to impair and loſe that which they have. Children that are bred up in lazineſs are almoſt neceſſarily bad, becauſe they cannot take the pains to be good; and they cannot take pains, becauſe they have never been inured and accuſtomed to it; which makes their ſpirits reſtive, and when you have occaſion to quicken them and ſpur them up to buſineſs, they will ſtand ſtock ſtill.

Therefore never let your children be without a calling, or without ſome uſeful, or at leaſt innocent

SERM. LI.

employment that will take them up; that they may not be put upon a kind of neceſſity of being vicious for want of ſomething better to do. The devil tempts the active and vigorous into his ſervice, knowing what fit and proper inſtruments they are to do his drudgery: but the ſlothful and idle, no body having hired them and ſet them on work, lie in his way, and he ſtumbles upon them as he goes about; and they do as it were offer themſelves to his ſervice, and having nothing to do they even tempt the devil himſelf to tempt them, and to take them in his way.

4thly, To ſincerity; which is not ſo properly a ſingle virtue, as the life and ſoul of all other graces and virtues; and without which, what ſhew of goodneſs ſoever a man may make, he is unſound and rotten at the heart. Cheriſh therefore this diſpoſition in children, as that which when they come to be men will be the great ſecurity and ornament of their lives, and will render them acceptable both to God and Men.

5thly, To tenderneſs and pity: which, when they come to engage in buſineſs and to have dealings in the world, will be a good bar againſt injuſtice and oppreſſion; and will be continually prompting us to charity, and will fetch powerful arguments for it from our own bowels.

To preſerve this goodneſs and tenderneſs of nature, this ſo very humane and uſeful affection, keep children, as much as poſſible, out of the way of bloody fights and ſpectacles of cruelty; and diſcountenance in them all cruel and barbarous uſage of creatures under their power; do not allow them

to

to torture and kill them for their ſport or pleaſure; SERM. LI.
becauſe this will inſenſibly and by degrees harden their hearts, and make them leſs apt to compaſſionate the wants of the poor and the ſufferings and afflictions of the miſerable.

Secondly, as the main foundations of Religion and virtue, children muſt be carefully trained up to the government of their paſſions, and of their tongues; and particularly to ſpeak truth, and to hate lying as a baſe and vile quality.

1ſt, To the good government of their paſſions. It is the diſorder of theſe, more eſpecially of deſire, and fear, and anger, which betrays us to many evils. Anger prompts men to contention and murder: inordinate deſire, to covetouſneſs and fraud and oppreſſion: and fear many times awes men into ſin, and deters them from their duty.

Now if theſe paſſions be cheriſhed, or even but let alone in children, they will in a ſhort time grow headſtrong and unruly, and when they come to be men will corrupt the judgment, and turn goodnature into humour, and the underſtanding into prejudice, and wilfulneſs: but if they be carefully obſerved and prudently reſtrained, they may by degrees be managed and brought under government; and the inordinacy of them being pruned away, they may prove excellent inſtruments of virtue.

Therefore be careful to diſcountenance in children any thing that looks like rage and furious anger, and to ſhew them the unreaſonableneſs and deformity of it. Check their longing deſires after things pleaſant, and uſe them to frequent diſappointments in that kind; that when you think fit to gratify

gratify them they may take it for a favour, and not challenge every thing they have a mind to as their due; and by degrees may learn to ſubmit to the more prudent choice of their parents, as being much better able to judge what is good and fit for them.

And when you ſee them at any time apt out of fear to neglect their duty, or to fall into any ſin, or to be tempted by telling a lye to commit one fault to hide and excuſe another, which children are very apt to do; the beſt remedy of this evil will be to plant a greater fear againſt a leſs, and to tell them what and whom they ſhould chiefly fear; "not him who "can hurt and kill the body, but him who after "he hath killed can deſtroy both body and ſoul "in hell."

The neglect of children in this matter, I mean in not teaching them to govern their paſſions, is the true cauſe why many that have proved ſincere chriſtians when they came to be men, have yet been very imperfect in their converſation, and their lives been full of inequalities aud breaches, which have not only been matter of great trouble and diſquiet to themſelves, but of great ſcandal to religion; when their light which ſhould ſhine before men is ſo often darkened and obſcured by theſe frequent and viſible infirmities.

2dly, To the government of their tongues. To this end teach children ſilence, eſpecially in the preſence of their betters. And as ſoon as they are capable of ſuch a leſſon, let them be taught not to ſpeak but upon conſideration, both of what they ſay, and before whom. And above all, inculcate upon them

that

that moſt neceſſary duty and virtue of ſpeaking truth, as one of the beſt and ſtrongeſt bands of humane ſociety and commerce: and poſſeſs them with the baſeneſs and vileneſs of telling a lye; for if it be ſo great a provocation to give a man the lye, then ſurely to be guilty of that fault muſt be a mighty reproach.

They who write of Japan tell us that thoſe People, though mere heathens, take ſuch an effectual courſe in the education of their children, as to render a lye, and breach of faith, above all things odious to them: inſomuch that it is a very rare thing for any perſon among them to be taken in a lye, or found guilty of breach of faith. And cannot the rules of chriſtianity be render'd as effectual to reſtrain men from theſe faults which are ſcandalous even to nature, and much more ſo to the chriſtian religion?

To the government of the tongue does likewiſe belong the reſtraining of children from lewd and obſcene words, from vain and profane talk; and eſpecially from horrid oaths and imprecations: from all which they are eaſily kept at firſt, but if they are once accuſtomed to them, it will be found no ſuch eaſy matter for them to get quit of theſe evil habits. It will require great attention and watchfulneſs over themſelves, to keep oaths out of their common diſcourſe: but if they be heated and in paſſion, they throw out oaths and curſes as naturally as men that are highly provoked fling ſtones, or any thing that comes next to hand at one another: ſo dangerous a thing is it to let any thing that is bad in children to grow up into a habit.

Thirdly,

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Thirdly, as the principal and eſſential parts of religion and virtue, let children be carefully bred up,

1ſt, To ſobriety and temperance in regard to themſelves; under which I comprehend likewiſe purity and chaſtity. The government of the ſenſual appetite as to all kind of bodily pleaſures is not only a great part of religion, but an excellent inſtrument of it, and a neceſſary foundation of piety and juſtice. For he that cannot govern himſelf is not like to diſcharge his duty either to GOD or men. And therefore St. Paul puts ſobriety firſt, as a primary and principal virtue in which men are inſtructed by the chriſtian religion, and which muſt be laid as the foundation both of piety towards GOD, and of righteouſneſs to men. "The grace of GOD, for ſo he calls the goſ-"pel, that brings ſalvation unto all men, hath ap-"peared; teaching us, that denying ungodlineſs and "worldly luſts, we ſhould live ſoberly, and righte-"ouſly, and godly in this preſent world." It firſt teacheth us to live ſoberly: and unleſs we train up children to this virtue, we muſt never expect that they will live righteouſly or godly in this preſent world.

Eſpecially, children muſt be bred up to great ſobriety and temperance in their diet, which will retrench the fuel of other inordinate appetites. It is a good ſaying I have met with ſomewhere, *Magna pars virtutis eſt bene moratus venter*, "a well-manner'd and "well-govern'd appetite, in matter of meats and "drinks, is a great part of virtue." I do not mean, that children ſhould be brought up according to the rules of a Leſſian diet, which ſets an equal ſtint to all ſtomachs,

ſtomachs, and is as ſenſeleſs a thing as a law would be which ſhould injoin that ſhoes for all mankind ſhould be made upon one and the ſame laſt. SERM. LI.

2dly, To a ſerious and unaffected piety and devotion towards God, ſtill and quiet, real and ſubſtantial, without much ſhew and noiſe; and as free, as may be, from all tricks of ſuperſtition, or freaks of enthuſiaſm; which, if parents and teachers be not very prudent, will almoſt unavoidably inſinuate themſelves into the religion of children; and when they are grown up will make them appear, to wiſe and ſober perſons, fantaſtical and conceited; and render them very apt to impoſe their own fooliſh ſuperſtitions and wild conceits upon others, who underſtand religion much better than themſelves.

Let them be taught to honour and love God above all things, to ſerve him in private, and to attend conſtantly upon his publick worſhip, and to keep their minds intent upon the ſeveral parts of it, without wandring and diſtraction: to pray to God as the fountain of all grace and "the giver of every good "and perfect gift:" and to acknowledge him, and to render thanks to him, as our moſt gracious and conſtant benefactor, and the great patron and preſerver of our lives: to be careful to do what he commands, and to avoid what he hath forbidden: to be always under a lively ſenſe and apprehenſion of his pure and all-ſeeing eye, which beholds us in ſecret: and to do every thing in obedience to the authority of that great "lawgiver, who is able to ſave and to deſtroy;" and with an awful regard to the ſtrict and impartial "judgment of the great day."

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3dly, To juſtice and honeſty: to defraud and oppreſs no man; to be as good as their word, and to perform all their promiſes and contracts; and endeavour to imprint upon their minds the equity of that great rule, which is ſo natural, and ſo eaſy, that even children are capable of it; I mean that rule which our bleſſed SAVIOUR tells us, "is the law and the "prophets," namely, that we ſhould do to others as we would have others do to us if we were in their caſe and circumſtances, and they in ours.

You that are parents and have to do in the world, ought to be juſt and equal in all your dealings. In the firſt place for the ſake of your own ſouls, and next for the ſake of your children; not only that you may entail no curſe upon the eſtate you leave them, but likewiſe that you may teach them no injuſtice by the example you ſet before them; which in this particular they will be as apt to imitate as in any one thing; becauſe of the preſent worldly advantage which it ſeems to bring, and becauſe juſtice is in truth a manly virtue and leaſt underſtood by children; and therefore injuſtice is a vice which they will ſooneſt practiſe and with the leaſt reluctancy, becauſe they have the leaſt knowledge of it in many particular caſes: and becauſe they have ſo little ſenſe of this great virtue, they ſhould not be allowed to cheat, no not in play and ſport, even when they play for little or nothing: for if they practiſe it in that caſe, and be unjuſt in a little, they will be much more tempted to be ſo when they can gain a great deal by it.

I remember that Xenophon in his inſtitution of Cyrus, which he deſigned for the idea of a well-educated prince, tells us this little but very inſtructive

ſtory

ſtory concerning young Cyrus: that his governor, the better to make him to underſtand the nature of juſtice, puts this caſe to him: you ſee there, ſays he to Cyrus, two boys playing, of different ſtature; the leſſer of them hath a very long coat, and the bigger a very ſhort one: now, ſays he, if you were a judge how would you diſpoſe of theſe two garments? Cyrus immediately, and with very good reaſon as he thought, paſſeth this ſudden ſentence, that the taller boy ſhould have the longer garment, and he that was of lower ſtature the ſhorter, becauſe this certainly was fitteſt for them both: upon which his governor ſharply rebukes him to this purpoſe; telling him, that if he were to make two coats for them he ſaid well; but he did not put this caſe to him as a tailor but as a judge, and as ſuch he had given a very wrong ſentence: for a judge, ſays he, ought not to conſider what is moſt fit, but what is juſt; not who could make the beſt uſe of a thing, but who hath the moſt right to it.

This I bring partly to ſhew in what familiar ways the principles of virtue may be inſtilled into children; but chiefly to prove that juſtice is a manly virtue, and that there is nothing wherein children may be more eaſily miſled, than in matter of right and wrong: therefore children ſhould be taught the general principles and rules of juſtice and righteouſneſs, becauſe if we would teach them to do juſtice we muſt teach them to know what juſtice is. For many are unjuſt merely out of ignorance and for want of knowing better, and cannot help it.

4thly, To charity; I mean chiefly to the poor and deſtitute; becauſe this, as it is an eſſential ſo it

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is a moſt ſubſtantial part of religion. Now to encourage this diſpoſition in children we muſt not only give them the example of it, but muſt frequently inculcate upon them ſuch paſſages of ſcripture as theſe, " that pure religion and undefiled before GOD " and the FATHER is this, to viſit the fatherleſs " and the widows in their affliction :" " that as we " ſow in this kind, ſo we ſhall reap :" that " he " ſhall have judgment without mercy who hath " ſhewed no mercy :" that at the judgment of the great day we ſhall in a very particular manner be called to an account for the practice or omiſſion of this duty, and ſhall then be abſolved or condemned according as we have exerciſed or neglected this great virtue of the chriſtian religion.

SERMON LII.

Of the education of children.

PROV. xxii. 6.

Train up a child in the way he ſhould go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.

V. THE good education of children conſiſts in giving them good example. This courſe David took in his family, as appears by that ſolemn reſolution of his, " I will be- Pſal. ci. 2. " have myſelf wiſely in a perfect way, I will walk " within my houſe with a perfect heart." Let parents

rents and masters of families give good example to their children and servants, in a constant serving of God in their families, which will nourish religion in those that are under their care: and let them also be exemplary in a sober and holy conversation before those that belong to them.

And let not your children, as far as is possible, have any bad examples to converse with, either among your servants, or their own companions; lest "by walking with them they learn their way "and get a blot to their souls." There is contagion in example, and nothing doth more slily insinuate itself and gain upon us than a living and familiar pattern; therefore, as much as in you lies, let children always have good examples before them.

Especially, let parents themselves be exemplary to them in the best things, because their example is of all other the most powerful, and carries greatest authority with it. And without this, instruction will signify very little, and the great force and efficacy of it will be lost. We shall find it very hard to persuade our children to do that which they see we do not practise ourselves. For even children have so much sense and sagacity as to understand that actions are more real than words, and a more certain indication of what a man doth truly and inwardly believe. Example is the most lively way of teaching, and because children are much given to imitation, it is likewise a very delightful way of instruction, and that of which children are most capable; both because it is best understood, and apt to make the deepest impression upon them.

So

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So that parents, above all others, have one argument to be religious and good themſelves, for the ſake of their children. If you deſire to have them good, the beſt way to make them ſo is to give them the example of it in being good yourſelves. For this reaſon parents ſhould take great care to do nothing but what is worthy of imitation. Your children will follow you in what you do, therefore do not go before them in any thing that is evil. The evil example of parents is both a temptation and encouragement to children to ſin, becauſe it is a kind of authority for what they do, and looks like a juſtification of their wickedneſs.

With what reaſon canſt thou expect that thy children ſhould follow thy good inſtructions, when thou thyſelf giveſt them an ill example? thou doſt but as it were becken to them with thy head, and ſhew them the way to heaven by thy good counſel, but thou takeſt them by the hand and leadeſt them in the way to hell by thy contrary example. Whenever you ſwear or tell a lye, or are paſſionate and furious, or come drunk into your family, you weaken the authority of your commands, and loſe all reverence and obedience to them by contradicting your own precepts.

The precepts of a good man are apt to raiſe and inflame others to the imitation of them, but when they come from one who is faulty and vicious in that kind himſelf, they are languid and faint, and give us no heart and encouragement to the exerciſe of thoſe virtues, which we plainly ſee they do not practiſe themſelves. It is the apoſtle's argument, "Thou therefore that teacheſt another, teacheſt thou

"not

" not thyſelf?" Thou that teacheſt thy children to ſpeak truth, doſt thou tell a lye? Thou that ſayeſt they muſt not ſwear, doſt thou profane the name of GOD by cuſtomary oaths and curſes? Thou art unfit to be " a guide of the blind, a light to them that " ſit in darkneſs, an inſtructor of the fooliſh, and " a teacher of babes; becauſe thou thyſelf haſt only " a form of knowledge and of truth in the law," but art deſtitute of the life and practice of it. In a word, if you be not careful to give good example to your children, you defeat your own counſels and undermine the beſt inſtructions you can give them; and they will all be ſpilt like water upon the barren ſands, they will have no effect, they will bring forth no fruit. SERM. LII.

VI. Good education conſiſts in wiſe and early reſtraints from that which is evil, by ſeaſonable reproof and correction. And this alſo is one way of inſtruction: ſo Solomon tells us, " The rod and " reproof giveth wiſdom:" And though both theſe do ſuppoſe a fault that is paſt, yet the great end of them is to prevent the like for the future, and to be an admonition to them for the time to come. And therefore whatever will probably be effectual for future caution and amendment, ought to be ſufficient in this kind, becauſe the end is always to give meaſure to the means: And where a mild and gentle rebuke will do the buſineſs, reproof may ſtop there without proceeding farther; or when that will not do, if a ſharp word and a ſevere admonition will be effectual, the rod may be ſpared. Prov. xxix. 15.

Provided always, that your lenity give no encouragement to ſin, and be ſo managed that children

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may perceive that you are in good earneſt, and reſolved that if they will not reform they ſhall certainly be puniſhed. And provided likewiſe, that your lenity bear a due proportion to the nature and quality of the fault. We muſt not uſe mildneſs in the caſe of a wilful and heinous ſin, eſpecially if it be exemplary and of publick influence. To rebuke gently upon ſuch an occaſion is rather to countenance the fault, and ſeems to argue that we are not ſenſible enough of the enormity of it, and that we have not a due diſlike and deteſtation for it: ſuch cold reproofs as thoſe which old Eli gave his ſons,

1 Sam. ii. 23, 24. "Why do you ſuch things? for I hear of your "evil dealings by all this people," that is, their carriage was ſuch as gave publick ſcandal: "Nay, "my Sons; for it is not a good report that I "hear, you make the LORD's people to tranſgreſs."

Such a cold reproof as this, where the crime was ſo great and notorious, was a kind of allowance of it, and a partaking with them in their ſin; and ſo GOD interprets it, and therefore calls it "a kick-

Chap. ii. 19. "ing at his ſacrifice, and a deſpiſing of his offer-"ing:" And he threatens Eli with moſt terrible judgments upon this very account, "becauſe his "ſons made themſelves vile, and he reſtrained them "not."

So that our Severity muſt be proportioned to the crime. Where the fault is great, there greater ſeverity muſt be uſed; ſo much at leaſt as may be an effectual reſtraint for the future. Here was Eli's miſcarriage, that in the caſe of ſo great a fault as his Sons were guilty of, his proceeding was neither proportioned to the crime, nor to the end of reproof

proof and correction, which is amendment for the future: but he uſed ſuch a mildneſs in his reproof of them, as was more apt to encourage than reſtrain them in their vile courſes: for ſo the text ſays, "that his ſons made themſelves vile, and he re- "ſtrained them not."

There are indeed ſome diſpoſitions ſo very tender and tractable, that a gentile reproof will ſuffice. But moſt children are of that temper that correction muſt be ſometimes uſed, and a fond indulgence in this caſe is many times their utter ruin and undoing; and in truth not love but hatred. So the wiſe man tells, "He that ſpareth the rod hateth his ſon, "but he that loveth him chaſteneth him betimes. "Chaſten thy ſon while there is hope, and let not "thy ſoul ſpare for his crying." And again, "Fooliſhneſs is bound up in the heart of a child, "and the rod of correction ſhall drive it far from "him. Withhold not correction from the child, "for if thou beateſt him with the rod he ſhall not "die: Thou ſhalt beat him with the rod, and ſhalt "deliver his ſoul from hell." Again, "The rod "and reproof giveth wiſdom, but a child left to "himſelf bringeth his mother to ſhame:" He mentions the mother emphatically, becauſe ſhe many times is moſt faulty in this fond indulgence; and therefore the ſhame and grief of it doth juſtly fall upon her.

Prov. xiii. 24. Ch. xix. 18. Ch. xxii. 15. Ch. xxiii. 13, 14. Ch. xxix. 15.

So that correction is of great uſe, and often neceſſary; and parents that forbear it, are not only cruel to their children, but to themſelves: for God many times puniſhes thoſe parents very ſeverely who have neglected this neceſſary piece of diſcipline.

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There is hardly to be found in the whole bible a more terrible temporal threatning than that concerning Eli and his houſe, for his fond indulgence to his ſons, who when they came to be men proved ſuch horrible ſcandals not only to their father, but to the prieſt's office; and to that degree as "to "make the ſacrifices of the LORD to be abhorred "by all the people." I will recite the threatning at large, for an admonition to parents that they be not guilty in this kind. "The LORD ſaid to "Samuel, Behold I will do a thing in Iſrael at "which both the ears of every one that heareth "it ſhall tingle: In that day I will perform againſt "Eli all things which I have ſpoken concerning his "houſe; when I begin I will alſo make an end. "For I have told him that I will judge his houſe "for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth, be-"cauſe his ſons made themſelves vile, and he re-"ſtrained them not: And therefore I have ſworn "unto the houſe of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's "houſe ſhall not be purged with ſacrifice nor offer-"ing for ever." I know very well that this enormous wickedneſs of Eli's ſons was committed by them after they were grown to be men, but this inſtance is nevertheleſs to my preſent purpoſe, there being hardly any doubt to be made but that it was the natural effect of a remiſs and too indulgent an education.

1 Sam. iii 11, 12, 13, 14.

Yea very often GOD doth correct and remarkably puniſh fond parents by thoſe very children who have wanted due reproof and correction: Of which the ſcripture gives us a remarkable inſtance in Adonijah, upon the mention of whoſe rebellion againſt David

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David his father, the text takes particular notice of his father's extreme fondneſs of him, as both the procuring and meritorious cauſe of it; "For his "father had not diſpleaſed him at any time in ſay-"ing, why haſt thou done ſo?" And on the contrary, the wiſe ſon of Sirach tells us, "that he "that chaſtiſeth his ſon ſhall have joy of him."

VII. The next thing I ſhall mention as a part of good education is, the bringing of children to be publickly catechized by the miniſter, to prepare them for ſolemn confirmation.

It was with a particular reſpect to this work of publick catechizing, and by way of introduction to it, that I at firſt propoſed to treat thus largely of the good education of children, hoping it might be of good uſe to handle this ſubject more fully than it hath uſually been done, at leaſt to my knowledge, from the pulpit.

And therefore I ſhall ſay ſomething, and that very briefly, concerning the nature, and concerning the neceſſity and great uſefulneſs of catechizing children.

Firſt, for the nature of it, it is a particular way of teaching by queſtion and anſwer, accommodated and fitted for the inſtruction of children in the principles of religion. I do not indeed find, that this particular method is any where injoined in ſcripture; but inſtruction in general is: and I doubt not but that upon this general warrant parents and miniſters may uſe that way of inſtruction of children which is moſt fit and proper to inſtil into them the principles of religion. It is true that the word κατηχεῖν, from whence our word catechiſm doth

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come, is uſed in ſcripture to ſignify teaching in general: but it hath ſince by eccleſiaſtical writers been appropriated to that particular way of inſtruction which hath been long in uſe in the chriſtian church, and is commonly called catechizing.

Secondly, as to the neceſſity and great uſefulneſs of it; catechizing hath a particular advantage as to children: becauſe they are ſubject to forgetfulneſs and want of attention. Now catechizing is a good remedy againſt both theſe; becauſe by queſtions put to them children are forced to take notice of what is taught, and muſt give ſome anſwer to the queſtion that is asked: and a catechiſm being ſhort, and containing in a little compaſs the moſt neceſſary principles of religion, it is the more eaſily remembred.

The great uſefulneſs and indeed the neceſſity of it plainly appears by experience. For it very ſeldom happens, that children which have not been catechized have any clear and competent knowledge of the principles of religion; and for want of this are incapable of receiving any great benefit by ſermons, which ſuppoſe perſons to be in ſome meaſure inſtructed before-hand in the main principles of religion.

Beſides, that if they have no principles of religion fixed in them, they become an eaſy prey to ſeducers. And we have had ſad experience of this in our age; and among many other diſmal effects of our late civil confuſions this is none of the leaſt, that publick catechizing was almoſt wholly diſuſed, and private too in moſt families: for had catechizing of children been continued, it is very probable that this age would have been infeſted with fewer errors and with fewer ſchiſms; and that there would not have been ſo much

much apoſtaſy from the fundamentals of religion. For it is, I think, a true obſervation, that catechizing, and the hiſtory of the martyrs have been the two great pillars of the proteſtant religion.

There being then ſo great a neceſſity and uſefulneſs of this way of inſtruction, I would earneſtly recommend the practice of it to parents and maſters of families with reſpect to their children and ſervants. For I do not think that this work ſhould lie wholly upon miniſters. You muſt do your part at home, who by your conſtant reſidence in your families have better and more eaſy opportunities of inculcating the principles of religion upon your children and ſervants. There you muſt prepare them for publick catechizing, that the work of the miniſter may not be too heavy upon him.

As to the part which concerns miniſters, I intend by GOD's aſſiſtance, ſo ſoon as the buſineſs can be put into a good method, to begin this exerciſe. And I do earneſtly intreat all that have young children and ſervants, to bring ſuch of them as are fit to be publickly catechized and inſtructed in the principles of religion: and I ſhall as often as ſhall be thought expedient ſpend ſome time in this work, between afternoon prayers and ſermon.

The catechiſm to be uſed ſhall be that appointed in our liturgy, which is ſhort, and contains in it the chief principles of the chriſtian religion. And I ſhall make a ſhort and plain explication of the heads of it; ſuitable to the capacity of children. And becauſe this may not probably be of ſo great advantage to thoſe who are of riper years and underſtandings, yet becauſe children are to be inſtructed as well

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well as men, I muſt intreat thoſe who are like to carry away the leaſt profit, to bring with them the more patience: eſpecially ſince I ſhall for their ſakes, in the conſtant courſe of my afternoon's ſermons, more largely and fully explain the chief principles of the chriſtian belief: a work which you know I have ſome time ago entred upon.

VIII. The laſt thing I ſhall mention, and with which the ſtate of childhood ends, is bringing of children to the biſhop, to be ſolemnly confirmed, by their taking upon themſelves the vow which by their ſureties they entred into at their baptiſm.

This is acknowledged by almoſt all ſects and parties of chriſtians to be of primitive antiquity, and of very great uſe when it is performed with that due preparation of perſons for it, by the miniſters to whoſe charge they belong, and with that ſeriouſneſs and ſolemnity which the nature of the thing doth require.

And to that end it were very deſirable that confirmations ſhould be more frequent, and in ſmaller numbers at a time; that ſo the biſhop may apply himſelf more particularly to every perſon that is to be confirmed, that by this means the thing may make the deeper impreſſion, and lay the ſtronger obligation upon them.

One thing more I could wiſh, both to prevent confuſion, and for the eaſe alſo of the biſhop, that his work may not be endleſs, that miniſters would take care that none may preſent themſelves to the biſhop, or be preſented by the miniſters, to be confirmed a ſecond time: becauſe a great many are wont to offer themſelves every time there is a confirmation, which

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is both very diſorderly and unreaſonable, there being every whit as little reaſon for a ſecond confirmation, as there is for a ſecond baptiſm: and if any perſons need ſo often to be confirmed, it is a ſign that confirmation hath very little effect upon them. SERM. LII.

II. I proceed to the ſecond general head, which was to give ſome more particular directions for the management of this work of the good education of children in ſuch a way as may be moſt effectual to its end.

Firſt, endeavour, as well as you can, to diſcover the particular temper and diſpoſition of children, that you may ſuit and apply yourſelves to it, and by ſtriking in with nature may ſteer and govern them in the ſweeteſt and eaſieſt way. This is like knowledge of the nature of the ground to be planted, which huſbandmen are wont very carefully to enquire into, that they may apply the ſeed to the ſoil, and plant in it that which is moſt proper for it:

Quid quæque ferat regio, quid quæque recuſet.
Hic ſegetes, illic veniunt feliciùs uvæ.

Every ſoil is not proper for all ſorts of grain or fruit; one ground is fit for corn, another for vines. And ſo it is in the tempers and diſpoſitions of children: ſome are more capable of one excellency and virtue than another, and ſome more ſtrongly inclined to one vice than another: which is a great ſecret of nature and providence, and it is very hard to give a juſt and ſatisfactory account of it.

It is good therefore to know the particular tempers of children, that we may accordingly apply our care to them, and manage them to the beſt advantage: that

SRRM. LII. that where we diſcern in them any forward inclinations to good, we may caſt in ſuch ſeeds and principles, as, by their ſuitableneſs to their particular tempers, we judge moſt likely to take ſooneſt and deepeſt root: and when theſe are grown up, and have taken poſſeſſion of the ſoil, they will prepare it for the ſeeds of other virtues.

And ſo likewiſe when we diſcover in their nature a more particular diſpoſition and leaning towards any thing which is bad, we muſt with great diligence and care apply ſuch inſtructions, and plant ſuch principles in them, as may be moſt effectual to alter this evil diſpoſition of their minds; that whilſt nature is tender and flexible we may gently bend it the other way: and it is almoſt incredible what ſtrange things by prudence and patience may be done towards the rectifying of a very perverſe and crooked diſpoſition.

So that it is of very great uſe to obſerve and diſcover the particular tempers of children, that in all our inſtruction and management of them we may apply ourſelves to their nature and hit their peculiar diſpoſition: by this means we may lead and draw them to their duty in humane ways, and ſuch as are much more agreeable to their temper than conſtraint and neceſſity, which are harſh and churliſh, and againſt the grain. Whatever is done with delight goes on cheerfully, but when nature is compelled and forced, things proceed heavily: therefore, when we are forming and faſhioning children to religion and virtue, we ſhould make all the advantage we can of their particular tempers. This will be a good direction and help to us to conduct nature

ture in the way it will moſt eaſily go. Every temper gives ſome particular advantage and handle whereby we may take hold of them and ſteer them more eaſily: but if we take a contrary courſe we muſt expect to meet with great difficulty and reluctancy. SERM. LII.

Such ways of education as are prudently fitted to the particular diſpoſitions of children are like wind and tide together, which will make the work go on amain: but thoſe ways and methods which are applied croſs to nature are like wind againſt tide, which make a great ſtir and conflict, but a very ſlow progreſs. Not that I do, or can expect that all parents ſhould be philoſophers, but that they ſhould uſe the beſt wiſdom they have in a matter of ſo great concernment.

Secondly, in your inſtruction of children endeavour to plant in them thoſe principles of religion and virtue which are moſt ſubſtantial, and are like to have the beſt influence upon the future government of their lives, and to be of continual and laſting uſe to them. Look to the ſeed you ſow, that it be ſound and good, and for the benefit and uſe of mankind: this is to be regarded, as well as the ground into which the ſeed is caſt.

Labour to beget in children a right apprehenſion of thoſe things which are moſt fundamental and neceſſary to the knowledge of God and our duty; and to make them ſenſible of the great evil and danger of ſin; and to work in them a firm belief of the next life, and of the eternal rewards and recompences of it. And if theſe principles once take root they will ſpread far and wide, and have a vaſt

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influence upon all their actions; and unleſs ſome powerful luſt, or temptation to vice hurry them away, they will probably accompany them and ſtick by them as long as they live.

Many parents, according to their beſt knowledge and apprehenſions of religion in which they themſelves have been educated, and too often according to their zeal without knowledge, do take great care to plant little and ill-grounded opinions in the minds of their children, and ſo faſhion them to a party by infuſing into them the particular notions and phraſes of a ſect, which when they come to be examined have no ſubſtance, nor perhaps ſenſe in them: And by this means, inſtead of bringing them up in the true and ſolid principles of chriſtianity, they take a great deal of pains to inſtruct them in ſome doubtful doctrines of no great moment in religion, and perhaps falſe at the bottom; whereby inſtead of teaching them to hate ſin, they fix them in ſchiſm, and teach them to hate and damn all thoſe who differ from them and are oppoſite to them; who yet are perhaps much more in the right, and far better chriſtians than themſelves.

And indeed nothing is more common and more to be pitied, than to ſee with what a confident contempt and ſcornful pity ſome ill-inſtructed and ignorant people will lament the blindneſs and ignorance of thoſe who have a thouſand times more true knowledge and skill than themſelves, not only in all other things, but even in the practice as well as knowledge of the chriſtian religion: believing thoſe who do not reliſh their affected phraſes and uncouth forms of ſpeech to be ignorant of the myſtery of the

the goſpel, and utter ſtrangers to the life and power of godlineſs. SERM. LII.

But now what is the effect of this miſtaken way of education? The harveſt is juſt anſwerable to the husbandry,

Infelix lolium & ſteriles dominantur avenæ;

As they have ſown, ſo they muſt expect to reap; and inſtead of good grain to have cockle and tares: "They have ſown the wind, and they ſhall reap "the whirlwind," as the expreſſion is in the prophet; inſtead of true religion, and of a ſober and peaceable converſation, there will come up new and wild opinions, a factious and uncharitable ſpirit, a furious and boiſterous zeal, which will neither ſuffer themſelves to be quiet, nor any body that is about them.

But if you deſire to reap the effects of true piety and religion, you muſt take care to plant in children the main and ſubſtantial principles of chriſtianity, which may give them a general bias to holineſs and goodneſs, and not to little particular opinions, which being once fixed in them by the ſtrong prejudice of education will hardly ever be rooted out.

Thirdly, do all that in you lies to check and diſcourage in them the firſt beginnings of ſin and vice: ſo ſoon as ever they appear pluck them up by the roots. This is like the weeding of corn, which is a neceſſary piece of good husbandry. Vices like ill weeds grow apace, and if they once take to the ſoil it will be hard to extirpate and kill them: but if we watch them and cut them up as ſoon as

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they appear, this will discourage the root and make it die.

Therefore take great heed that your children be not habituated and accustomed to any evil course. A vice that is of any considerable growth and continuance will soon grow obstinate, and having once spread its root, it will be a very difficult matter to clear the ground of it. A child may be so long neglected till he be overgrown with vice to that degree, that it may be out of the power of parents ever to bring him to good fruit. If it once gain upon the depraved disposition of children, it will be one of the hardest things in the world to give a stop to it. It is the Apostle's caution "to take "heed of being hardened by the deceitfulness of "sin," which they who go on in an evil course will most certainly be. We should observe the first appearances of evil in children, and kill those young serpents as soon as they stir lest they bite them to death.

Fourthly, bring them, as soon as they are capable of it, to the publick worship of God, where he hath promised his more especial presence and blessing. It is in Zion, the place of God's publick worship, where "the Lord hath commanded the "blessing, even life for evermore:" There are the means which God hath appointed for the begetting and increasing of grace in us: This is the pool where the angel useth to come and to move the waters: bring your children hither, where if they diligently attend they may meet with an opportunity of being healed.

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And when they come from the church, call them frequently to an account of what they have heard and learned there: this will make them both to attend more diligently to what they hear, and to lay it up in their memories with greater care, and will fix it there ſo as to make a deeper and more laſting impreſſion upon their minds.

Fifthly, be careful more eſpecially to put them upon the exerciſe and practice of religion and virtue, in ſuch inſtances as their underſtanding and age are capable of. Teach them ſome ſhort and proper forms of prayer to GOD, to be ſaid by them devoutly upon their knees in private, at leaſt every morning and evening. A great many children neglect this, not from any ill diſpoſition of mind, but becauſe no body takes care to teach them how to do it. And if they were taught and put upon doing it, the habit and cuſtom of any thing will after a little while make that eaſy and delightful enough, which they cannot afterwards be brought to without great difficulty and reluctancy.

Knowledge and practice do mutually promote and help forward one another. Knowledge prepares and diſpoſeth for practice, and practice is the beſt way to perfect knowledge in any kind. Mere ſpeculation is a very raw and rude thing in compariſon of that true and diſtinct knowledge which is gotten by practice and experience. The moſt exact skill in geography is nothing compared with the knowledge of that man, who beſides the ſpeculative part hath travelled over and carefully viewed the Countries he hath read of. The moſt knowing man in the art and rules of navigation is no body in compariſon

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pariſon of an experienced pilate and ſeaman. Becauſe knowledge perfected by practice is as much different from mere ſpeculation, as the skill of doing a thing is from being told how a thing is to be done. For men may eaſily miſtake rules, but frequent practice and experience are ſeldom deceived. Give me a man that conſtantly does a thing well, and that ſhall ſatisfy me that he knows how to do it. That ſaying of our bleſſed SAVIOUR, "If any man "will do my will, he ſhall know of the doctrine "whether it be of GOD, or whether I ſpeak of "my ſelf," is a clear determination of this matter, namely, that they underſtand the will of GOD beſt who are moſt careful to do it. And ſo likewiſe the beſt way to know what GOD is, is to tranſcribe his perfections in our lives and actions; to be holy, and juſt, and good, and merciful as he is.

Therefore when the minds of children are once throughly poſſeſt with the true principles of religion, we ſhould bend all our endeavours to put them upon the practice of what they know: let them rather be taught to do well than to talk well; rather to avoid what is evil, in all its ſhapes and appearances, and to practiſe their duty in the ſeveral inſtances of it, than "to ſpeak with the tongues
Job xxviii. 28. "of men and angels:" "Unto man he ſaid, be-
"hold, the fear of the LORD, that is wiſdom, and
1 Joh. ii. 3, 4. "to depart from evil is underſtanding." "Hereby,
"ſaith St. John, we know that we know him, if
"we keep his commandments: he that ſaith I
"know him and keepeth not his commandments
"is a liar, and the truth is not in him."

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Xenophon tells us, that the Perſians inſtead of making their children learned taught them to be virtuous; and inſtead of filling their heads with fine ſpeculations, taught them honeſty, and ſincerity, and reſolution; and endeavoured to make them wiſe and valiant, juſt and temperate. Lycurgus alſo in the inſtitution of the Lacedemonian commonwealth took no care about learning, but only about the lives and manners of their children: though I ſhould think that the care of both is beſt, and that learning would very much help to form the manners of children, and to make them both wiſer and better men: and therefore with the leave of ſo great and wiſe a lawgiver, I cannot but think that this was a defect in his inſtitution: becauſe learning, if it be under the conduct of true wiſdom and goodneſs, is not only an ornament but a great advantage to the better government of any kingdom or commonwealth.

Sixthly, there muſt be great care and diligence uſed in this whole buſineſs of education, and more particularly in the inſtruction of children. There muſt be "line upon line, and precept upon pre- Iſa. xxviii. "cept, here a little and there a little," as the pro- 10. phet expreſſeth it. The principles of religion and virtue muſt be inſtilled and dropt into them by ſuch degrees and in ſuch a meaſure as they are capable of receiving them: for children are narrow-mouth'd veſſels, and a great deal cannot be poured into them at once.

And they muſt alſo be accuſtomed to the practice and exerciſe of religion and goodneſs by degrees, till holineſs and virtue have taken root, and they

they be well ſettled and confirmed in a good courſe. Now this requires conſtant attendance and even the patience of the husbandman to wait for the fruit of our labours.

In ſome children the ſeeds that are ſown fall into a greater depth of earth, and therefore are of a ſlow diſcloſure, and it may be a conſiderable time before they appear above-ground; it is long before they ſhoot and grow up to any height, and yet they may afterwards be very conſiderable: Sir H. W. "which, as an ingenious author obſerves, ſhould "excite the care and prevent the deſpair of pa- "rents: for if their children be not ſuch ſpeedy "ſpreaders and branchers as the vine, they may "perhaps prove

——*proles tardè creſcentis olivæ.*"

It is a work of great pains and difficulty to rectify a perverſe diſpoſition. It is more eaſy to palliate the corruption of nature, but the cure of it requires time and careful looking to. An evil temper and inclination may be covered and concealed, but it is a great work to conquer and ſubdue it. It muſt firſt be check'd and ſtopp'd in its courſe, and then weaken'd and the force of it be broken by degrees, and at laſt, if it be poſſible, deſtroyed and rooted out.

Seventhly and laſtly, to all theſe means we muſt add our conſtant and earneſt prayers to GOD for our children, that his grace may take an early poſſeſſion of them; that he would give them virtuous inclinations and towardly diſpoſitions for goodneſs: and that he would be pleaſed to accompany all our endea-

endeavours to that end with his powerful assistance and blessing; without which, all that we can do will prove ineffectual. Parents may plant, and ministers may water, but it is GOD that must give the increase. SERM. LII.

Be often then upon your knees for your children. Do not only teach them to pray for themselves, but do you likewise with great fervour and earnestness "commend them to GOD and to the power "of his grace," which alone is able to sanctify them. Apply yourselves to "the father of lights; "from whom comes every good and perfect gift:" beg his HOLY SPIRIT, and ask divine knowledge and wisdom for them of him, "who giveth to all "liberally and upbraideth no man:" beseech him to season their tender years with his fear, which is the beginning of wisdom: pray for them as Abraham did for Ishmael, "O that Ishmael may live in thy "sight."

Many parents, having found all their endeavours for a long time together ineffectual, have at length betook themselves to prayer, earnest and importunate prayer to GOD, as their last refuge. Monica, the mother of St. Austin, by the constancy and importunity of her prayers obtained of GOD the conversion of her son, who proved afterwards so great and glorious an instrument of good to the church of GOD: according to what St. Ambrose bishop of Milan, to encourage her to persevere in her fervent prayers for her son, had said to her, *Fieri non potest ut filius tot lachrymarum pereat:* "It cannot be, says "he, that a son of so many prayers and tears should "miscarry." GOD's grace is free, but it is not unlikely

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likely but that GOD will at laſt give in this bleſſing to our earneſt prayers and faithful endeavours.

Therefore pray for them "without ceaſing, pray "and faint not." Great importunity in prayer ſeldom fails of a gracious anſwer: our bleſſed SAVIOUR ſpake two parables on purpoſe to encourage us herein: not becauſe GOD is moved, much leſs becauſe he is tired out with our importunity; but becauſe it is an argument of our firm belief and confidence in his great goodneſs: "and "to them that believe all things are poſſible, ſays "our bleſſed LORD:" To whom, *&c.*

SERMON LIII.

Of the education of children.

PROV. xxii. 6.

Train up a child in the way he ſhould go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.

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I Proceed to the next general head which I propoſed, namely,

III. To diſcover ſome of the more remarkable and common miſcarriages in the management of this work. I do not hereby mean groſs neglects for want of care, but miſtakes and miſcarriages for want of prudence and skill, even when there is no want of care and diligence in parents and inſtructors. And

I ſhall for method's ſake reduce the more conſiderable and common miſcarriages to theſe three heads. SERM. LIII.

Firſt, in matter of inſtruction.

Secondly, in matter of example.

Thirdly, in matter of reproof and correction.

I. In matter of inſtruction. Parents do very often mainly miſcarry in not teaching their children the true difference between good and evil, and the degrees of them; as when we teach them any thing is a ſin that really is not, or that any thing is not a ſin which in truth is ſo: or when we teach them to lay more ſtreſs and weight upon things than they will bear; making that which perhaps is only convenient to be in the higheſt degree neceſſary, or that which it may be is only inconvenient, or may be an occaſion of ſcandal to ſome weak chriſtians, to be a ſin in its own nature damnable.

Parents do likewiſe lay too great a weight upon things, when they are as diligent to inſtruct them in leſſer things, and as ſtrict in injoining them, and as ſevere in puniſhing the commiſſion or neglect of them, according as they eſteem them good or evil, as if they were the weightier things of the law, and matters of the greateſt moment in religion.

Thus I have known very careful and well-meaning parents that have with great ſeverity reſtrained their children in the wearing of their hair: nay I can remember ſince the wearing of it below their ears was looked upon as a ſin of the firſt magnitude; and when miniſters generally, whatever their text was, did in every ſermon either find or make an occaſion with great ſeverity to reprove the great ſin of long hair; and if they ſaw any one in the

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congregation guilty in that kind, they would point him out particularly, and let fly at him with great zeal.

I have likewiſe known ſome parents that have ſtrictly forbidden their children the uſe of ſome ſorts of recreations and games under the notion of heinous ſins, upon a miſtake, that becauſe there was in them a mixture of fortune and skill they were therefore unlawful; a reaſon which I think hath no weight and force in it, though I do not deny but humane laws may for very prudent reaſons either reſtrain or forbid the uſe of theſe games, becauſe of the boundleſs expence both of money and time which is many times occaſioned by them.

I have known others, nay perhaps the ſame perſons, that would not only allow but even encourage their children to deſpiſe the very ſervice of God under ſome forms, which according to their ſeveral apprehenſions they eſteemed to be ſuperſtitious or factious. But this I have ever thought to be a thing of moſt dangerous conſequence, and have often obſerved it to end either in the neglect or contempt of all religion.

And how many parents teach their children doubtful opinions, and lay great ſtreſs upon them as if they were ſaving or damning points; and hereby ſet ſuch an edge and keenneſs upon them for or againſt ſome indifferent modes and circumſtances of God's worſhip as if the very being of a church and the eſſence of religion were concerned in them?

Theſe certainly are great miſtakes, and many times have very pernicious effects, thus to confound things which are of ſo wide and vaſt a difference

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as good and evil, lawful and unlawful, indifferent and neceſſary. For when children come to be men, and to have a freer and larger view of the world, and ſhall find by the contrary practice of very wiſe and ſerious perſons that they have quite different apprehenſions of theſe matters, and do not think that to be a ſin which their parents have ſo ſtrictly forbidden them under that notion, and many times puniſhed them more ſeverely for the doing of it than if they had told a lye, this may make them apt to queſtion whether any thing be a ſin: and the violences which they offer to their conſciences, and the ſtrain that they give them upon ſuch an occaſion, by complying with the general practice of others contrary to the principles of their education, doth many times open a gap for great and real ſins. SERM. LIII.

Beſides, that children which are bred up in high prejudices for or againſt indifferent opinions or practices in religion, do uſually when they are grown up prove to be men of narrow and contracted ſpirits, peeviſh and froward and uncharitable, and many times great bigots and zealots either in the ways of ſuperſtition or faction, according to the principles which have been inſtilled into them to bias them either way. And very hardly do they ever quit themſelves ſo clearly of their prejudices, as to become wiſe and peaceable and ſubſtantial Chriſtians.

In ſhort, if we carefully obſerve it, we ſhall find that when children have been thus indiſcreetly educated, their religion differs as much from that of ſober and judicious chriſtians as the civil behaviour and converſation of thoſe who have been unskilfully and con-

conceitedly taught how to carry themſelves, does from the behaviour of thoſe who have had a more free and generous education.

II. In matter of example. There are many parents whoſe lives are exemplary in the main, who yet ſeem to uſe too great a freedom before their children. It is an old rule, and I think a very good one:

Maxima debetur pueris reverentia.

"There is a very great reverence due to children." There are many things which are not ſins, and therefore may lawfully be done, which yet it may not be prudent and expedient to do before all perſons. There are ſome words and actions ſo trivial and light, that they are not fit to be ſaid or done before thoſe for whom we have a reverence. There is a certain freedom of converſation which is only proper among equals in age and quality, which if we uſe before our ſuperiors and betters, we ſeem to contemn them; if before our inferiors, they will go nigh to contemn us.

It ought to be conſidered, that children do not underſtand the exact limits of good and evil, ſo that if in our words or actions we go to the utmoſt bounds of that which is lawful, we ſhall be in danger of ſhewing them the way to that which is unlawful. Children are not wont to be careful of their ſteps, and therefore we will not venture them to play about a precipice, or near a dangerous place, where yet men that will take care may go ſafely enough. And therefore parents ſhould be very careful to keep their children from the confines of evil, and at as great a diſtance from

from it as they can. And to this end their words and actions ſhould be ever tempered with gravity and circumſpection, that children may not ſee or hear any thing which may acquaint them with the approaches to ſin, or carry them to the borders of vice; leſt they ſhould not ſtop juſt there, but take a ſtep further than you intended they ſhould go.

III. In matter of reproof and correction: many religious and careful parents are guilty of two great miſcarriages in this part of education.

Firſt, Of too much rigor and ſeverity; which, eſpecially with ſome ſort of tempers, hath very ill ſucceſs. The firſt experiment that ſhould be made upon children ſhould be to allure them to their duty, and by reaſonable inducements to gain them to the love of goodneſs; by praiſe and reward, and ſometimes by ſhame and diſgrace: and if this will do, there will be no occaſion to proceed to ſeverity; eſpecially not to great ſeverities, which are very unſuitable to humane nature. A mixture of prudent and ſeaſonable reproof or correction when there is occaſion for it, may do very well; but whips are not the cords of a man: humane nature may be driven by them, but it muſt be led by ſweeter and gentler ways.

Speuſippus cauſed the pictures of joy and gladneſs to be ſet round about his ſchool, to ſignify that the buſineſs of education ought to be rendred as pleaſant as may be: and indeed children ſtand in need of all the enticements and encouragements to learning and goodneſs. *Metus haud diuturni magiſter officii*, ſays Tully; "Fear alone will not teach "a man his duty and hold him to it for a long "time:" For when that is removed, nature will break

break looſe and do like it ſelf: beſides, that frequent corrections make puniſhments to loſe their awe and force, and are apt to ſpoil the diſpoſition of children, and to harden them againſt ſhame; and after a while they will deſpiſe correction, when they find they can endure it.

Great ſeverities do often work an effect quite contrary to that which was intended. And many times thoſe who were bred up in a very ſevere ſchool, hate learning ever after for the ſake of the cruelty that was uſed to force it upon them: and ſo likewiſe an endeavour to bring children to piety and goodneſs by unreaſonable ſtrictneſs and rigor does often beget in them a laſting diſguſt and prejudice againſt religion, and teaches them, as *Eraſmus* ſays, *virtutem ſimul odiſſe & nôſſe*, "to hate virtue at the "ſame time that they teach them to know it:" for by this means virtue is repreſented to the minds of children under a great diſadvantage, and good and evil are brought too near together: ſo that whenever they think of religion and virtue, they remember the ſeverity which was wont to accompany the inſtructions about it; and the natural hatred which men have for puniſhment is by this means derived upon religion it ſelf. And indeed how can it be expected that children ſhould love their duty, when they never hear of it but with a handful of rods ſhak'd over them?

I inſiſt upon this the more, becauſe I do not remember to have obſerved more notorious inſtances of great miſcarriage, than in the children of very ſtrict and ſevere parents; of which I can give no other account but this, that nature when it is thus over-

overcharged recoils the more terribly: it hath ſomething in it like the ſpring of an engine, which being forcibly preſs'd does upon the firſt liberty return back with ſo much the greater violence. In like manner the vicious diſpoſitions of children, when reſtrained merely by the ſeverity of parents, do break forth ſtrangely as ſoon as ever they get looſe and from under their diſcipline.

Secondly, another miſcarriage in this matter is when reproof and correction are accompanied and managed with paſſion. This is to betray one fault, and perhaps a greater in the puniſhment of another. Beſides, that this makes reproof and correction to look like revenge and hatred, which uſually does not perſuade and reform but provoke and exaſperate. And this probably may be one reaſon of the apoſtle's admonition, "parents provoke not your "children unto wrath," becauſe that is never likely to have any good effect. Correction is a kind of phyſick, which ought never to be adminiſtred in paſſion, but upon counſel and good advice. Heb. x. 12.

And that paſſion is incident to parents upon this occaſion, the apoſtle tells us when he ſays, "that "the parents of our fleſh chaſten us for their plea- "ſure," that is, they do it many times to gratify their paſſion; but GOD chaſtens us for our profit, not in anger but with a deſign to do us good; and can we have a better pattern than our heavenly Father to imitate? Heb. x. 12.

A father is as it were a prince and a judge in his family: there he gives laws, and inflicts cenſures and puniſhments upon offenders. But how misbe-

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coming a thing would it be to ſee a judge paſs ſentence upon a man in choler? It is the ſame thing to ſee a father in the heat and fury of his paſſion correct his child. If a father could but ſee himſelf in this mood, and how ill his paſſion becomes him, inſtead of being angry with his child he would be out of patience with himſelf. I proceed to the next thing I propoſed, namely,

IV. To make out the truth of of the propoſition contained in the text, by ſhewing how the good education of children comes to be of ſo great advantage, and to have ſo good and laſting an influence upon their whole lives.

I confeſs there are ſome wild and ſavage natures, monſtrous and prodigious tempers, hard as the rocks, and barren as the ſand upon the ſea-ſhore; which diſcover ſtrong and early propenſions to vice, and a violent antipathy to goodneſs. Such tempers are next to deſperate, but yet they are not utterly intractable to the grace of GOD and the religious care of Parents.

I hope ſuch tempers as theſe are very rare, though GOD is pleaſed they ſhould ſometimes appear in the world, as inſtances of the great corruption and degeneracy of humane nature, and of the great need of divine grace. But ſurely there is no temper that is abſolutely and irrecoverably prejudiced againſt that which is good. This would be ſo terrible an objection againſt the providence of GOD as would be very hard to be anſwered. God be thanked, moſt tempers are tractable to good education, and there is very great probability of the good ſucceſs of it, if it be carefully and wiſely managed.

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And for the confirmation of this truth I ſhall inſtance in two very great advantages of a religious and virtuous education of children.

1ſt, It gives religion and virtue the advantage of the firſt poſſeſſion.

2dly, The advantage of habit and cuſtom.

Firſt, good education gives religion and virtue the advantage of the firſt poſſeſſion. The mind of man is an active principle, and will be employed about ſomething or other. It cannot ſtand idle, and will therefore take up with that which firſt offers itſelf. So ſoon as reaſon puts forth itſelf, and the underſtanding begins to be exerciſed, the mind of man diſcovers a natural thirſt after knowledge, and greedily drinks in that which comes firſt. If it have not the waters of life and the pure ſtreams of goodneſs to allay that thirſt, it will ſeek to quench it in the filthy puddles and impure pleaſures of this world.

Now ſince children will be buſying their minds about ſomething, it is good that they ſhould be entertained with the beſt things and with the beſt notions and principles of which their underſtanding and age are capable. It is a happy thing to be principled, and, as I may ſay, prejudiced the better way, and that religion ſhould get the firſt poſſeſſion of their hearts. For it is certainly a great advantage to religion to be planted in a tender and freſh ſoil. And if parents be careleſs, and neglect this advantage, the enemy will be ſure to ſow his tares while the husbandman is aſleep.

Therefore we ſhould prevent the devil by giving God and goodneſs an early poſſeſſion of our children, and by letting him into their hearts betimes. Poſſeſſion is a great point, and it is of mighty con-

ſequence to have nature planted with good ſeeds before vicious inclinations ſpring up and grow into ſtrength and habit.

I know that there is a ſpiteful proverb current in the world, and the devil hath taken care to ſpread it to the diſcouragement of an early piety, "A young "ſaint and an old devil;" but notwithſtanding this, a young ſaint is moſt likely to prove an old one. Solomon to be ſure was of this mind, and I make no doubt but he made as wiſe and true proverbs as any body hath done ſince: him only excepted who was a much greater and wiſer man than Solomon.

Secondly, good education gives likewiſe the advantage of habit and cuſtom; and cuſtom is of mighty force. It is, as *Pliny* in one of his Epiſtles ſays of it, *efficaciſſimus omnium rerum magiſter*, "the "moſt powerful and effectual maſter in every kind." It is an acquired and a ſort of ſecond nature, and next to nature itſelf a principle of greateſt power. Cuſtom bears a huge ſway in all humane actions. Men love thoſe things and do them with eaſe to which they have been long inured and accuſtomed. And on the contrary men go againſt cuſtom with great regret and uneaſineſs.

And among all others, that cuſtom is moſt ſtrong which is begun in childhood: and we ſee in experience the ſtrange power of education in forming perſons to religion and virtue. Now education is nothing but certain cuſtoms planted in childhood, and which have taken deep root whilſt nature was tender.

We ſee likewiſe in common experience how dangerous an evil habit and cuſtom is, and how hard to be alter'd. Therefore the Cretians, when they would curſe a man to purpoſe, wiſhed that the gods would engage him in ſome bad cuſtom, looking upon a man after that to be irrecoverably loſt. So on the other ſide, to be engaged in a good cuſtom is an unſpeakable advantage; eſpecially for children to be habituated to a holy and virtuous courſe, before the habits of ſin and vice have taken root and are confirmed in them.

We are too naturally inclined to that which is evil: but yet this ought not to diſcourage us, becauſe it is certain in experience that a contrary cuſtom hath done much in many caſes, even where nature hath been ſtrongly inclined the other way. Demoſthenes did by great reſolution and almoſt infinite pains, and after a long habit, alter the natural imperfection of his ſpeech, and even in deſpite of nature became the moſt eloquent man perhaps that ever lived. And this amounts even to a demonſtration, for what hath been done may be done.

So that it is not univerſally true which Ariſtotle ſays, "that nature cannot be altered." It is true indeed in the inſtance which he gives of throwing a ſtone upward; you cannot, ſays he, by any cuſtom, nay though you fling it up never ſo often, teach a ſtone to aſcend of itſelf: and ſo it is in many other inſtances in which nature is peremptory: but nature is not always ſo; but ſometimes hath a great latitude: as we ſee in young trees, which though they naturally grow ſtraight up, yet being gently bent may be made to grow any way. But above all, moral inclinations

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clinations and habits do admit of great alteration, and are ſubject to the power of a contrary cuſtom.

Indeed children when they come to be men, ſhould take great care, that they do not owe their religion only to cuſtom; but they ſhould upon conſideration and due examination of the grounds of it, ſo far as they are capable of doing it, make it their choice. And yet for all that we muſt not deny the beſt religion in the world this greateſt advantage of all other. It is certainly a great happineſs for children to be inclined to that which when they come to underſtand themſelves they would make their choice, if they were indifferent: but an indifferency cannot be preſerved in children: and therefore, ſince they will certainly be biaſſed one way or other, there is all the reaſon in the world why we ſhould endeavour to bias them the better way. Parents may often miſtake about what is beſt, but if they love their children they cannot but wiſh and endeavour that they may be good and do what is beſt.

I come now to the laſt head I propoſed, which was,

V. To endeavour by the moſt powerful arguments I can offer, to ſtir up and perſuade thoſe whoſe duty this is, to diſcharge it with great care and conſcience.

If the foregoing diſcourſe be true, what can be ſaid to thoſe who are guilty in the higheſt degree of the groſs neglect of this great duty? who neither by inſtruction, nor example, nor reſtraint from evil, do endeavour to make their children good. Some parents are ſuch monſters, I had almoſt ſaid devils, as not to know how "to give good things

"to

" to their children;" but instead of bread give them a stone, instead of a fish give them a serpent, instead of an egg give them a scorpion, as our SAVIOUR expresseth it. SERM. LIII.

These are evil indeed, who train up their children for ruin and destruction; in the service of the devil, and in the trade and mystery of iniquity: who, instead of teaching them the fear of the LORD, infuse into them the principles of atheism, and irreligion, and profaneness: instead of teaching them to love and reverence religion, they teach them to hate and despise it, and to make a mock both of sin and holiness: instead of training them up in the knowledge of " the holy scriptures which are able " to make men wise unto salvation," they do *ædificare ad gehennam*, " they edify them for hell," by teaching them to profane that holy book, and to abuse the word of GOD which they ought to tremble at, by turning it into jest and rallery: instead of teaching them to pray and to bless the name of GOD, they teach them to blaspheme that great and terrible name, and to profane it by their continual oaths and imprecations: and instead of bringing them to GOD's church, they carry them to the devil's chapels, to playhouses and places of debauchery, those schools and nurseries of lewdness and vice.

Thus they, who ought to be the great teachers and examples of holiness and virtue, are the chief encouragers and patterns of vice and wickedness in their children; and instead of restraining them from evil, they countenance them in it, and check all forward inclinations to goodness; till at last they make them ten times more the children of wrath, than

they

they were by that corrupt nature which they derived from them; and hereby treaſure up, both for their children and themſelves, "wrath againſt the day "of wrath and the revelation of the righteous "judgment of GOD."

But I hope there are few or none ſuch here. They do not uſe to frequent GOD's houſe and worſhip. And therefore I ſhall apply my ſelf to thoſe who are not ſo notoriouſly guilty in this kind, though they are greatly faulty in neglecting the good education of their children. And for the greater conviction of ſuch parents, I ſhall offer to them the following conſiderations.

Firſt, conſider what a ſad inheritance you have conveyed to your children. You have tranſmitted to them corrupt and depraved natures, evil and vicious inclinations: you have begotten them in your own image and likeneſs, ſo that by nature they are children of wrath. Now methinks parents that have a due ſenſe of this ſhould be very ſolicitous, by the beſt means they can uſe, to free them from that curſe; by endeavouring to correct thoſe perverſe diſpoſitions and curſed inclinations which they have tranſmitted to them. Surely you ought to do all you can to repair that broken eſtate which from you is deſcended upon them.

When a man hath by treaſon tainted his blood and forfeited his eſtate, with what grief and regret doth he look upon his children, and think of the injury he hath done to them by his fault? and how ſolicitous is he, before he die, to petition the king for favour to his children? how earneſtly doth he charge his friends to be careful of them

and

and kind to them? that by these means he may make the best reparation he can of their fortune which hath been ruin'd by his fault. SERM. LIII.

And have parents such a tenderness for their children, in reference to their estate and condition in this world; and have they none for the good estate of their souls and their eternal condition in another world? if you are sensible that their blood is tainted, and that their best fortunes are ruin'd by your sad misfortunes; why do you not bestir your selves for the repairing of GOD's image in them? Why do you not "travel in birth till CHRIST be formed in "them?" Why do you not pray earnestly to GOD and give him no rest, who hath reprieved, and it may be pardoned you, that he would extend his grace to them also, and grant them the blessings of his new covenant?

All your children are begotten of the bond-woman; therefore we should pray as Abraham did, "O that Ishmael may live in thy sight:" O that these sons of Hagar may be heirs of a blessing.

Secondly, consider in the next place, that good education is the very best inheritance that you can leave to your children. It is a wise saying of Solomon, "that wisdom is good with an inheritance;" but surely an inheritance, without wisdom and virtue to manage it, is a very pernicious thing. And yet how many parents are there who omit no care and industry to get an estate that they may leave it to their children, but use no means to form their minds and manners for the right use and enjoyment of it; without which it had been much happier Eccl. vii. 7.

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pier for them to have been left in great poverty and ſtraits?

Doſt thou love thy child? this is true love to any one, to do the beſt for him we can. Of all your toil and labour for your children, this may be all the fruit they may reap, and all that they may live to enjoy, the advantage of a good education. All other things are uncertain. You may raiſe your children to honour, and ſettle a noble eſtate upon them to ſupport it. You may leave them, as you think, to faithful guardians, and by kindneſs and obligation procure them many friends: and when you have done all this, their guardians may prove unfaithful and treacherous, and in the changes and revolutions of the world their honours may ſlip from under them, and their "riches may take to them-"ſelves wings and fly away:" And when theſe are gone, and they come to be nipp'd with the froſts of adverſity, their friends will fall off like leaves in autumn. "This is a ſore evil, which yet I have "ſeen under the ſun."

But if the good education of your children hath made them wiſe and virtuous, you have provided an inheritance for them which is out of the reach of fortune, and cannot be taken from them. Crates the philoſopher uſed to ſtand in the higheſt places of the city, and cry out to the inhabitants, "O ye "people! why do you toil to get eſtates for your "children, when you take no care for their edu-"cation?" This is, as Diogenes ſaid, to take care of the ſhoe, but none of the foot that is to wear it; to take great pains for an eſtate for your children,

dren, but none at all to teach them how to use it; that is, to take great care to undo them, but none to make them happy. SERM. LIII.

Thirdly, consider that by a careful and religious education of your children you provide for your own comfort and happiness. However they happen to prove, you will have the comfort of a good conscience and of having done your duty. If they be good, they are matter of great comfort and joy to their parents. "A wise son, saith Solomon, mak-"eth a glad father." It is a great satisfaction to see that which we have planted to thrive and grow up; to find the good effect of our care and industry, and that the work of our hands doth prosper. The son of Sirach, among several things for which he reckons a man happy, mentions this in the first place, "He that hath joy of his chil-"dren." Eccles. xxv, 7.

On the contrary, in wicked children the honour of a family fails, our name withers, and in the next generation will be quite blotted out: whereas a hopeful posterity is a prospect of a kind of eternity. We cannot leave a better and more lasting monument of our selves, than in wise and virtuous children. Buildings and books are but dead things in comparison of these living memorials of our selves.

By the good education of your children you provide for your selves some of the best comforts both for this world and the other. For this world; and that at such a time when you most stand in need of comfort, I mean the time of sickness and old age. Wise men have been wont to lay up some

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præsidia senectutis, something to support them in that gloomy and melancholy time, as books, and friends, or the like. But there is no such external comfort at such a time as good and dutiful children. They will then be the light of our eyes, and the cordial of our fainting spirits; and will recompense all our former care of them by their present care of us: and when we are decaying and withering away, we shall have the pleasure to see our youth as it were renewed, and our selves flourishing again in our children. The son of Sirach speaking of the comfort which a good father hath in a well educated son, "Though he die, says he, yet he is as "if he were not dead, for he hath left one be- "hind him that is like himself. While he lived "he saw and rejoiced in him, and when he died "he was not sorrowful."

Ecclus. xxx. 4, 5.

Whereas on the contrary, "a foolish son is, as "Solomon tells us, a heaviness to his mother," the miscarriage of a child being apt most tenderly to affect the mother. Such parents as neglect their children, do as it were provide so many pains and aches for themselves against they come to be old. And rebellious children are to their infirm and aged parents so many aggravations of an evil day, so many burdens of their age: they help to bow them down and "to bring their gray hairs so much the "sooner with sorrow to the grave." They do usually repay their parents all the neglect of their education by their undutiful carriage towards them.

And good children will likewise be an unspeakable comfort to us in the other world. When we come to appear before God at the day of judgment,

ment, to be able to say to him, "Lo! here am I "and the children which thou hast given me:" how will this comfort our hearts, and make us lift up our heads with joy in that day?

Fourthly, consider that the surest foundation of the publick welfare and happiness is laid in the good education of children: families are increased by children, and cities and nations are made up of families. And this is a matter of so great concernment both to religion and the civil happiness of a nation, that anciently the best constituted commonwealths did commit this care to the magistrate more than to parents.

When Antipater demanded of the Spartans fifty of their children for hostages, they offer'd rather to deliver to him twice as many men; so much did they value the loss of their country's education. But now amongst us this work lies chiefly upon parents. There are several ways of reforming men; by the laws of the civil magistrate, and by the publick preaching of ministers. But the most likely and hopeful reformation of the world must begin with children. Wholsom laws and good sermons are but slow and late ways: the timely and the most compendious way is a good education. This may be an effectual prevention of evil, whereas all after-ways are but remedies, which do always suppose some neglect and omission of timely care.

And because our laws leave so much to parents, our care should be so much the greater: and we should remember that we bring up our children for the publick, and that if they live to be men, as they come out of our hands they will prove a pub-

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lick happineſs or miſchief to the age. So that we can no way better deſerve of mankind and be greater benefactors to the world, than by peopling it with a righteous offspring. Good children are the hopes of poſterity, and we cannot leave the world a better legacy than well-diſciplin'd children. This gives the world the beſt ſecurity that religion will be propagated to poſterity, and that the generations to come ſhall know GOD, "and the chil-"dren that are to be born ſhall fear the LORD."

This was the great glory of Abraham, next to his being the friend of GOD, that he was the father of the faithful. And the careful education of children, "in the nurture and admonition of the "LORD," is ſo honourable to parents, that GOD himſelf would not paſs it by in Abraham without ſpecial mention of it to his everlaſting commendation: "I know Abraham, ſays GOD, that he will "command his children and his houſhold after "him to keep the way of the LORD, and to do "juſtice and judgment."

Gen. xviii. 19.

Fifthly, conſider yet further the great evils conſequent upon this neglect. And they are manifold. But not to enlarge particularly upon them, they all end in this, the final miſcarriage and ruin of children. Do but leave depraved corrupt nature to its ſelf, and it will take its own courſe, and the end of it in all probability will be miſerable.

If the generous ſeeds of religion and virtue be not carefully ſown in the tender minds of children, and thoſe ſeeds be not cultivated by good education, there will certainly ſpring up briers and thorns, of which parents will not only feel the inconveniences,

conveniences, but every body elſe that comes near them. SERM. LIII.

Neglectis urenda filix innaſcitur agris.

If the ground be not planted with ſomething that is good, it will bring forth that which is either uſeleſs or hurtful, or both; for nature is ſeldom barren, it will either bring forth uſeful plants, or weeds.

We are naturally inclined to evil, and the neglect of education puts children upon a kind of neceſſity of becoming what they are naturally inclined to be. Do but let them alone, and they will ſoon be habituated to ſin and vice. And when they are once accuſtomed to do evil, they have loſt their liberty and choice: they are then hardly capable of good counſel and inſtruction: or if they be patient to hear it, they have no power to follow it, being bound in the chains of their ſins, and led captive by Satan at his pleaſure. And when they have brought themſelves into this condition, their ruin ſeems to be ſealed, and without a miracle of GOD's grace, they are never to be reclaimed.

Nor doth the miſchief of this neglect end here, but it extends it ſelf to the publick, and to poſterity. If we neglect the good education of our children, they will in all probability prove bad men; and theſe will neglect their children; and ſo the foundation of an endleſs miſchief is laid; and our poſterity will be bad members both of church and commonwealth.

If they be neglected in matter of inſtruction, they will either be ignorant or erroneous: either they will not mind religion, or they will diſturb the

the church with new and wild opinions: and I fear, that the neglect of inſtructing and catechizing youth, of which this age hath been ſo groſly guilty, hath made it ſo fruitful of errors and ſtrange opinions.

But if beſides this, no care be taken of their lives and manners, they will become burdens of the earth, and peſts of humane ſociety, and ſo much poiſon and infection let abroad into the world.

Sixthly and laſtly, parents ſhould often conſider that the neglect of this duty will not only involve them in the inconvenience and ſhame, and ſorrow, of their childrens miſcarriage, but in a great meaſure in the guilt of it: they will have a great ſhare in all the evil they do, and be in ſome ſort chargeable with all the ſins they commit. If the children bring forth wild and ſour grapes, the parents teeth will be ſet on edge.

The temporal miſchiefs and inconveniences which come from the careleſs education of children as to credit, health and eſtate, all which do uſually ſuffer by the vicious and lewd courſes of your children; theſe methinks ſhould awaken your care and diligence: but what is this to the guilt which will redound to you upon their account? Part of all their wickedneſs will be put upon your ſcore; and poſſibly the ſins, which they commit many years after you are dead and gone, will follow you into the other world, and bring new fuel to hell, to heat that furnace hotter upon you.

However, this is certain, that parents muſt one day be accountable for all their neglects of their children: and ſo likewiſe ſhall miniſters and maſters of families for their people and ſervants, ſo far as they had the charge of them. And

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And what will parents be able to ſay to GOD at the day of judgment for all their neglects of their children, in matter of inſtruction, and example, and reſtraint from evil? How will it make your ears to tingle, when GOD ſhall ariſe terribly to judgment, and ſay to you, "Behold! the children which I have "given you; they were ignorant, and you inſtructed "them not; they made themſelves vile, and you re- "ſtrained them not: why did not you teach them at "home, and bring them to church to the publick or- "dinances and worſhip of GOD, and train them up to "the exerciſe of piety and devotion? But you did not "only neglect to give them good inſtruction, but you "gave them bad example: and lo! they have fol- "lowed you to hell, to be an addition to your tor- "ment there."

"Unnatural wretches! that have thus neglected, "and by your neglect deſtroyed thoſe, whoſe happineſs "by ſo many bonds of duty and affection you were "obliged to procure: behold! the books are now open, "and there is not one prayer upon record that ever "you put up for your children: there is no memorial, "no not ſo much as of one hour that ever was ſeriouſly "ſpent to train them up to a ſenſe of GOD, and to "the knowledge of their duty: but on the contrary "it appears, that you have many ways contrived their "miſery, and contributed to their ruin, and help'd "forward their damnation. How could you be thus "unnatural? How could you thus hate your own "fleſh, and hate your own ſouls? How much better "had it been for them, and how much better for "you, that they had never been born?"

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Would not such a heavy charge as this make every joint of you to tremble? will it not cut you to the heart, and pierce your very souls, to have your children challenge you in that day, and say to you one by one, "Had you been as careful to "teach me the good knowledge of the LORD, "as I was capable of learning it: had you been "but as forward to instruct me in my duty, as "I was ready to have hearken'd to it, it had not "been with me as it is at this day; I had not "now stood trembling here in a fearful expecta- "tion of the eternal doom which is just ready to "be pass'd upon me. Curs'd be the man that begat "me, and the paps that gave me suck. 'Tis to "you that I must in a great measure owe my ever- "lasting undoing." Would it not strike any of us with horror to be thus challenged and reproached by our children "in that great and terrible day of "the LORD?"

I am not able to make so dreadful a repre- sentation of this matter as it deserves. But I would by all this, if it be possible, awaken parents to a sense of their duty, and terrify them out of this gross and shameful neglect which so many are guilty of. For when I seriously consider how supinely remiss and unconcerned many parents are as to the religious education of their children, I cannot but think of that saying of Augustus con- cerning Herod, "Better be his dog than his child:" I think it was spoken to another purpose, but it is true likewise to the purpose I am speaking of: better be some mens dogs, or hawks, or horses,

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than their children: for they take a greater care to breed and train up these to their several ends and uses, than to breed up their children for eternal happiness.

Upon all these accounts, "train up a child in "the way he should go, that when he is old he "may not depart from it:" that neither your children may be miserable by your fault, nor you by the neglect of so natural and necessary a duty towards them. God grant that all that are concerned may lay these things seriously to heart, for his mercies sake in Jesus Christ; to whom, with thee O Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory both now and ever. Amen.

SERMON LIV.

Of the advantages of an early piety.

Preached in the church of St. *Lawrence-Jury*, in the year 1662.

ECCLES. xii. 1.

Remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou ſhalt ſay, I have no pleaſure in them.

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IN the former diſcourſes, concerning the education of children, I have carried the argument through the ſtate of childhood to the beginning of the next ſtep of their age which we call youth; when they come to exerciſe their reaſon, and to be fit to take upon themſelves the performance of that ſolemn vow which was made for them by their ſureties in baptiſm.

To encourage them to ſet ſeriouſly and in good earneſt about this work, I ſhall now add another diſcourſe concerning the advantages of an early piety. And to this purpoſe I have choſen for the foundation of it theſe words of Solomon, in his book called Eccleſiaſtes or the Preacher: "Remember now thy cre-" ator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days

" come

" come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou " shalt say I have no pleasure in them." SERM. LIV.

It will not be necessary to give an account of the context any further than to tell you, that this book of the royal preacher is a lively description of the vanity of the world in general, and particularly of the life of man. This is the main body of his sermon, in which there are here and there scattered many serious reflexions upon ourselves, and very weighty considerations to quicken our preparations for our latter end, and to put us in mind of " the days of darkness " which will be many," as the preacher tells us in the chapter before the text.

Among these is the admonition and advice in the words of the text: which do indeed concern those that are young, but yet will afford useful matter of meditation to persons of all ages and conditions whatsoever: of great thankfulness to almighty God from those who by the grace of God, and his blessing upon a pious education, have entred upon a religious course betimes: and of a deep sorrow and repentance to those who have neglected and let slip this best opportunity of their lives; and of taking up a firm resolution of redeeming that loss, as much as is possible, by their future care and diligence: and to them more especially, who are grown old and have not yet begun this great and necessary work, it will minister occasion to resolve upon a speedy retreat, and without any further delay to return to God and their duty; lest the opportunity of doing it, which is now almost quite spent, be lost for ever.

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The text contains a duty, which is "to remember our creator;" and a limitation of it, more especially to one particular age and time of our life; "in the days of our youth:" not to exclude any other age, but to lay a particular emphasis and weight upon this: "remember thy creator in the "days of thy youth," that is, more especially in this age of thy life: to intimate to us, both that this is the fittest season, and that we cannot begin this work too soon.

And this is further illustrated by the opposition of it to old age: "when the evil days come not, nor "the years draw nigh, of which thou shalt say I "have no pleasure in them:" this is a description of old age, the evils whereof are continually growing; and which in respect of the cares and griefs, the distempers and infirmities which usually attend it, is rather a burden than a pleasure.

In the handling of these words, I shall do these three things,

First, I shall consider the nature of the act or duty here injoin'd, and that is "to remember God.

Secondly, I shall consider what there is in the notion of God as creator which is more particularly apt to awaken, and oblige us to the remembrance of him.

Thirdly, I shall consider the limitation of this duty more especially to this particular age of our lives, "the days of our youth:" why we should begin this work then, and not put it off to the time of old age.

I. I shall consider the nature of the act or duty here injoin'd, which is "to remember our crea-
"tor."

" tor." For the understanding of which expression and others of the like nature in scripture, it is to be consider'd that it is very usual in scripture to express religion and the whole duty of man by some eminent act, or principle, or part of religion: sometimes by the knowledge of GOD, and by faith in him; and very frequently by the fear and by the love of GOD; because these are the great principles and parts of religion: and so likewise, though not so frequently, religion is express'd by the remembrance of GOD: now remembrance is the actual thought of what we do habitually know. To remember GOD is to have him actually in our minds, and upon all proper occasions to revive the thoughts of him, and as David expresseth it, to set him always before us: " I set the LORD, says he, always " before me," that is, GOD was continually present to his mind and thoughts.

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And in opposition to this we find wicked men in scripture described by the contrary quality, forgetfulness of GOD: so they are described in Job; " such are the paths of them that forget GOD," that is, of the wicked: and the same description David gives of them. " The wicked, says he, " shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that " forget GOD:" and elsewhere he gives the same character of a wicked man, " that GOD is not in all " his thoughts."

Job viii. 13. Psal. ix. 17. Psal. x. 4.

And the course of a religious life is not unfitly express'd by our remembrance of God. For to remember a person or thing is to call them to mind upon all proper and fitting occasions: to think actually of them, so as to do that which the remembrance

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membrance of them does require, or prompt us to. To remember a friend, is to be ready upon occaſion to do him all good offices: to remember a kindneſs and benefit, is to be ready to acknowledge and requite it when there is an opportunity: to remember an injury, is to be ready to revenge it: and in a word, to remember any thing is to be mindful to do that which the memory of ſuch a thing doth naturally ſuggeſt to us.

So that to remember GOD, is frequently and in our moſt ſerious and retired thoughts to conſider that there is ſuch a being as GOD is; of all power and perfection, who made us and all other things, and hath given us laws to live by, ſuitable to our natures; and will call us to a ſtrict account for our obſervance or violation of them, and accordingly reward or puniſh us; very often in this world, and to be ſure in the other.

It is to revive often in our minds the thoughts of GOD and of his infinite perfections, and to live continually under the power and awe of theſe apprehenſions, that he is infinitely wiſe and good, holy and juſt; that he is always preſent with us, and obſerves what we do, and is intimate to our moſt ſecret thoughts, "and will bring every work into judg-"ment, and every ſecret thing, whether it be good, "or whether it be evil;" as the preacher tells us in the concluſion of this ſermon.

The duty then here required of us, is ſo ſoon as we arrive at the uſe of reaſon and the exerciſe of our underſtandings, to take GOD into conſideration, and to begin a religious courſe of life betimes; to conſecrate the beginning of our days and the flower and ſtrength

ſtrength of them to his ſervice: whilſt our mind is yet ſoft and tender, and in a great meaſure free from all other impreſſions, to be mindful of the being that is above us; and in all our deſigns and actions to take GOD into conſideration, and to do every thing in his fear, and with an eye to his glory. "Remember thy "creator," that is, honour, fear, love, obey and ſerve him; and in a word, do every thing as becomes one that is mindful of GOD, and hath him continually in his thoughts.

II. I ſhall in the next place conſider, what there is in the notion of GOD as our creator that is more particularly apt to awaken and oblige men to the remembrance of GOD. The text does not barely require us to remember GOD, but to remember him as the author and founder of our Beings; "Remember "thy creator." And there is certainly ſome particular emphaſis in it, ſo that GOD conſidered under the notion of our creator is apt to ſtrike us with a particular regard and awe of him. And that upon a threefold account; as creation is a ſenſible demonſtration to us, 1ſt, Of the being. 2dly, Of the power; and 3dly, Of the goodneſs of GOD.

Firſt, Of his being. The creation is of all other the moſt ſenſible and obvious argument of a Deity. Other conſiderations may work upon our reaſon and underſtanding, but this doth as it were bring GOD down to our ſenſes. So often as we look up to heaven, or down upon the earth; upon ourſelves, or into ourſelves; upon the things without us, and round about us; which way ſoever we turn our eyes, we are encountered with plain evidences of a ſuperior being, which made us and all other things: every thing

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which we behold with our eyes doth in some way or other represent GOD to us and bring him to our minds, so as we cannot avoid the sight of him, if we would. So the psalmist tells us, "The heavens "declare the glory of GOD, and the firmament shews "the work of his hands." And so likewise St. Paul, "The invisible things of him, from the creation of "the world, are clearly seen, being understood by "the things which are made; even his eternal power "and godhead."

Psal. xix. 1.

Rom. i. 20.

Secondly, as the creation is a demonstration of GOD's infinite power. And this consideration is apt to work upon our fear, the most wakeful passion of all other in the soul of man: insomuch that the atheist would fain ascribe the original apprehension and belief of a deity to the natural fears of men; *Primus in orbe deos fecit timor*, "Fear first made Gods;" and by this means would fain persuade us that it is so far from being true that GOD is our creator, that he is merely the creature of our own vain fear and imagination.

But surely this is very unreasonable. For if there be a GOD that made us, there is infinite reason why we should stand in awe of him, and have him always in our mind and thoughts; because he who made us and all other things, if we neglect him and forget so great a benefactor, can as easily make us miserable, or turn us out of being. Therefore "remember thy "creator," and despise or forget him at thy utmost peril.

Thirdly, as the creation is a demonstration of the goodness of GOD to his creatures. This consideration of GOD as our creator, doth naturally suggest

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to our minds, that his goodneſs brought us into being; and that if being be a benefit, GOD is the fountain and author of it; that his goodneſs called us out of nothing, and made us to be what we are; "for of his good pleaſure we are and were created." He was under no neceſſity of doing it; for he was from eternal ages happy in himſelf before we were, and would have been ſo to all eternity though we had never been; nor was it poſſible he could be under any obligation to us before we were. SERM. LIV.

And he is not only our creator as he gave us our beings at firſt, but likewiſe as we are preſerved and continued in life by the ſame goodneſs which firſt gave us life and breath; "for of his goodneſs we ARE as well as were created."

And can we forget ſo great a benefactor, and be "unmindful of the GOD that formed us?" Can we chooſe but remember the founder of our beings, the great patron and preſerver of our lives? And ſo ſoon as we arrive at the uſe of reaſon, and diſcover this great benefactor to whom we owe our lives and all the bleſſings of them, can we forbear to do homage to him, and to ſay with David, "O "come, let us worſhip and fall down and kneel "before the LORD our maker: for he is the "LORD our GOD, it is he that hath made us, "and not we ourſelves; we are his people, and "the ſheep of his paſture." I proceed to conſider in the

III. and laſt place, the reaſon of the limitation of this duty more eſpecially to this particular age of our

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lives, "Remember now thy creator in the days of "thy youth, when the evil days come not, nor the "years draw nigh when thou ſhalt ſay I have no "pleaſure in them:" "NOW; in the days of thy "youth;" by which Solomon plainly deſigns two things,

Firſt, To engage young perſons to begin this great and neceſſary work of religion betimes, and as ſoon as ever they are capable of taking it into conſideration, "Remember thy creator in the days "of thy youth." And the ſon of Sirach much to the ſame purpoſe, ſpeaking of one that in good earneſt applies his heart to wiſdom, deſcribes him in this manner, "He will give his heart to reſort "early to the LORD that made him;" which is the ſame with the expreſſion in the text, "of re-"membring our creator in the days of our "youth."

Secondly, to engage young perſons to ſet about this work preſently, and not to defer it and put it off to the future, as moſt are apt to do; "Remem-"ber NOW thy creator in the days of thy youth:" eſpecially, not to adjourn it to the moſt unfit and improper time of all other, to the time of infirmity and old age, "NOW, the days of thy youth; "when the evil days come not, nor the years draw "nigh when thou ſhalt ſay I have no pleaſure in "them: while the ſun, or the light, or the moon, "or the ſtars be not darken'd, &c."

And how much reaſon there is to preſs both theſe conſiderations upon young perſons, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew in the following particulars.

Firſt,

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Firſt, becauſe in this age of our lives we have the greateſt and moſt ſenſible obligation "to remember "GOD our creator: in the days of our youth," when the bleſſing and benefit of life is new, and the memory of it freſh upon our minds. It ought not indeed to be ſo, but we find it true which Seneca ſays, *Nihil citiùs ſeneſcit quàm gratia*, "Nothing ſooner grows old and out of date than "obligations;" and we are but too apt to forget what we have the greateſt reaſon to remember.

In this age of our life, when we begin to come to the free uſe and exerciſe of our reaſon, the firſt thing we are inſtructed in, and if we were not taught it we ſhould, though perhaps more ſlowly, diſcover and find it out of ourſelves: I ſay, the firſt thing we are inſtructed in and inquiſitive about is the author of our beings, and how we came into the world: and when GOD firſt appears to our minds, and we come by degrees clearly to underſtand by whoſe bounty and bleſſing it is that we are and have been preſerved thus long, without our own care; principally by the providence of GOD, and under him by thoſe inſtruments which he hath raiſed and preſerved for that purpoſe: when we conſider this, we cannot but be ſtrangely ſurprized both with the novelty of the benefit and the greatneſs of it.

And when we have well viewed ourſelves, and look'd about us, upon the Creatures below us, all of them ſubject to our dominion and uſe: and when we conſider ſeriouſly in what a noble rank and order of creatures we are placed; and how fearfully and wonderfully we are made, not groveling upon the earth or bowed down to it, but of a beautiful

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tiful and upright ſhape of body, and ſuch a majeſty of countenance, as if we were all kings of the creation: and which is much more excellent than this, that we are endued with minds and underſtandings, with reaſon and ſpeech, whereby we are capable not only of converſing with and benefiting one another, but alſo of the knowledge and friendſhip and enjoyment of the beſt and moſt perfect of beings, GOD himſelf: I ſay when we firſt conſider this and meditate ſeriouſly upon it, can we poſſibly ever after forget GOD? Shall we not naturally break out into that enquiry which Elihu thinks ſo proper for man that he wonders it is not in every man's mouth, "Where is

Job xxxv. 10, 11.

"GOD my maker, who teacheth me more than the "beaſts of the earth, and maketh me wiſer than the "fowls of heaven?"

So that there is a very ſpecial obligation upon us to be mindful of GOD in this age of our lives, when we firſt come to the knowledge of him, and when the ſenſe of his favours is freſh and new to us; and not only ſo, but when the bleſſing of life is at the very beſt and in its verdure and flower; when our health is in its ſtrength and vigor, and the pleaſures and enjoyment of life have their full taſte and perfect reliſh. So Job deſcribes the days of his youth,

Job xxix. 2, 3, 4.

"O that I were as in months paſt, as in the days "when GOD preſerved me; when his candle ſhined "upon my head, and when by his light I walked "through darkneſs, as I was in the days of my "youth, *&c.*"

Indeed when the evil days are once come, and thou art enter'd upon the years in which thou thyſelf haſt no pleaſure, there might be ſome ſort of pretence then

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to forget GOD; becauſe then life begins to wither and decay, and not only the gloſs and beauty but even the comfort and ſweetneſs of it is gone, and it becomes an inſipid and taſteleſs thing: "but "thou art inexcuſable, O man, whoever thou art," if thou art unmindful of GOD in the beſt age of thy life, and when the ſenſe of his benefits ought upon all accounts to make the ſtrongeſt and deepeſt impreſſions upon thy mind.

Secondly, the reaſon will be yet ſtronger to put us upon this, if we conſider that notwithſtanding the great obligation which lies upon us "to re-"member our creator in the days of our youth," we are moſt apt at that time of all other to forget him. For that which is the great bleſſing of youth is alſo the great danger of it, I mean the health and proſperity of it; and though men have then leaſt reaſon, yet they are moſt apt to forget GOD in the height of pleaſure and in the abundance of all things.

Youth is extremely addicted to pleaſure, becauſe it is moſt capable and moſt ſenſible of it; and where we are moſt apt to be tranſported, there we are moſt apt to tranſgreſs. Nothing does ſo beſot the mind and extinguiſh in it all ſenſe of divine things as ſenſual pleaſures. If we fall in love with them, they will take off our thoughts from religion and ſteal away our hearts from GOD. "For no "man can ſerve two maſters," and "the carnal "mind is enmity againſt GOD."

Beſides that youth is raſh and inconſiderate, becauſe unexperienced; and conſequently not apt to be cautious and prudent, no not as to the future concernments

cernments of this temporal life; much leſs of that which ſeems to be at ſo much a greater diſtance, and for that reaſon is ſo very ſeldom in our thoughts.

Thirdly, becauſe this age is of all other the fitteſt and beſt to begin a religious courſe of life. And this does not contradict the former argument, though it ſeems to do ſo. For as it is true of children, that they are moſt prone to be idle and yet fitteſt to learn; ſo in the caſe we are ſpeaking of both are true, that youth is an age wherein we are too apt, if left to our ſelves, to forget GOD and religion, and yet at the ſame time fitteſt to receive the impreſſions of it.

Youth is *ætas diſciplinæ*, the proper age of diſcipline; very obſequious and tractable, fit to receive any kind of impreſſion and imbibe any tincture: now we ſhould lay hold of this golden opportunity. This age of ſuppleneſs, and obedience, and patience for labour, ſhould be plied by parents, before that rigor and ſtiffneſs which grows with years comes on too faſt. Childhood and youth are choice ſeaſons for planting of religion and virtue, and if parents and teachers ſleep in this ſeed-time they are ill husbandmen; for this is the time of plowing and ſowing.

This age is certainly the moſt proper for inſtruction, according to that of the prophet, "Whom "ſhall he teach knowledge? whom ſhall he make "to underſtand doctrine? them that are weaned "from the milk and drawn from the breaſt. For "precept muſt be upon precept, and line upon "line, here a little and there a little." And the

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ſooner this is done, the better; only things muſt be inſtilled into them gently and by degrees.

It is a noted ſaying of Ariſtotle, "that young "perſons are not fit to hear lectures of moral phi- "loſophy;" becauſe at that age paſſion is ſo predominant and unruly: by which, I think, he only means that the minds of young perſons are leaſt prepared to receive the precepts of morality and to ſubmit to them; but that he does not hereby intend, that therefore no care ought to be uſed to form the minds and manners of youth to virtue and goodneſs. He certainly underſtood the nature and power of evil habits too well to be of that mind; and conſequently muſt think that the principles of morality ought with great care and diligence to be inſtill'd into young perſons betimes; becauſe they of all other have the moſt need of this kind of inſtruction, and this age is the moſt proper ſeaſon for it: and the leſs their minds are prepared for it, ſo much the more pains ought to be taken with them, that they may be taught to govern and ſubdue their paſſions before they grow too ſtiff and headſtrong. So that if the ſeeds of religion and virtue be not planted in our younger years, what is to be expected in old age? according to that of the ſon of Sirach, "If thou haſt "gathered nothing in thy youth, how canſt thou "expect to find any thing in thine age?" Eccluſ. xxv. 13.

Young years are tender and eaſily wrought upon, apt to be moulded into any faſhion; they are *udum & molle lutum*, "like moiſt and ſoft clay" which is pliable to any form; but ſoon grows hard, and then nothing is to be made of it. It is a very

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very difficult thing to make impreſſions upon age, and to deface the evil which hath been deeply imprinted upon young and tender minds. When good inſtruction hath been neglected at firſt, a conceited ignorance doth commonly take poſſeſſion, and obſtruct all the paſſages through which knowledge and wiſdom ſhould enter into us.

Upon this conſideration the work of religion ſhould be begun betimes, becauſe it is a mighty advantage to any thing to be planted in a ground that is newly broken up. It is juſt the ſame thing for young perſons to be enter'd into a religious courſe, and to have their minds habituated to virtue before vicious cuſtoms have got place and ſtrength in us: for whoever ſhall attempt this afterwards will meet with infinite difficulty and oppoſition, and muſt diſpute his ground by inches.

It is good therefore to do that which muſt be done one time or other, when it is eaſieſt to be done; when we may do it with the greateſt advantage, and are likely to meet with the leaſt and weakeſt oppoſition. We ſhould anticipate vice and prevent the devil and the world, by letting God into our hearts betimes, and giving religion the firſt ſeiſin and poſſeſſion of our ſouls. This is the time of ſowing our ſeed, which muſt by no means be neglected. For the ſoul will not lie fallow; good or evil will come up. If our minds be not cultivated by religion, ſin and vice will get the poſſeſſion of them: but if our tender years be ſeaſoned with the knowledge and fear of God, this in all probability will have a good influence upon the following courſe of our lives.

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In a word, this age of our lives is proper for labour and conflict; becauſe youth is full of heat and vigor, of courage and reſolution to enterprize and effect difficult things. This heat indeed renders young perſons very unfit to adviſe and direct themſelves, and therefore they have need to be adviſed and directed by thoſe who are wiſer and more experienced: but yet this heat makes them very fit for practice and action; for though they are bad at counſel, they are admirable at execution, when their heat is well directed; they have a great deal of vivacity and quickneſs, of courage and conſtancy in the way wherein they are ſet.

Beſides, that youth hath a great ſenſe of honour and virtue, of praiſe and commendation, which are of great force to engage young perſons to attempt worthy and excellent things. For hope and confidence, ſtrength and courage, with which ſenſe of honour and deſire of praiſe are apt to inſpire them, are admirable inſtruments of victory and maſtery in any kind; and theſe are proper and moſt peculiar to youth. "I write unto you young men, ſaith "St. John, becauſe ye are ſtrong, and have over-"come the evil one."

And, beſides the ſpirit and vigor of youth, young perſons have ſeveral other qualities which make them very capable of learning any thing that is good. They are apt to believe, becauſe they have not been often deceived; and this is a very good quality in a learner. And they are full of hopes, which will encourage them to attempt things even beyond their ſtrength; becauſe hope is always of the future, and the life of young perſons is in a great mea-

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ſure before them and yet to come. And, which is a good bridle to reſtrain them from that which is evil, they are commonly very modeſt and baſhful: and which is alſo a ſingular advantage, they are more apt to do that which is honeſt and commendable than that which is gainful and profitable, being in a great meaſure free from the love of money, which experience, as well as the apoſtle, tells us "is the root of all "evil." Children are very ſeldom covetous, becauſe they have ſeldom been bitten by want.

Fourthly, this is the moſt acceptable time of all other, becauſe it is the firſt of our age. Under the law the firſt-fruits and the firſt-born were GOD's. In like manner we ſhould devote the firſt of our age and time to him. GOD is the firſt and moſt excellent of beings, and therefore it is fit that the prime of our age and the excellency of our ſtrength ſhould be dedicated to him and his ſervice.

An early piety muſt needs be very acceptable and pleaſing to GOD. Our bleſſed LORD took great pleaſure to ſee little children come unto him; an emblem of the pleaſure he takes that men ſhould liſt themſelves betimes in his ſervice. St. John was the youngeſt of all the diſciples, and our SAVIOUR had a very particular kindneſs and affection for him; for he is ſaid to be "the diſciple whom JESUS "loved."

It is a good ſign that we value GOD as we ought, and have a true eſteem for his ſervice, when we can find in our hearts to give him our good days, and the years which we ourſelves have pleaſure in: and that we have a grateful ſenſe of his benefits and of our mighty obligation to him, when we make the

the quickeſt and beſt returns we can, and think no- SERM. LIV.
thing too good to render to him from whom we have received all.

It is likewiſe an argument of great ſincerity, which is the Soul of all religion and virtue, when a man devotes himſelf to GOD betimes; becauſe it is a good evidence that he is not drawn by thoſe forcible conſtraints, nor driven to GOD by that preſſing neceſſity which lies upon men in time of ſickneſs and old age. And on the contrary, it cannot but be very diſpleaſing to GOD to be neglected by us when we are in the flower and vigour of our age: when our blood is warm and our ſpirits quick, and our parts are at the beſt, then to think our ſelves too good to ſerve GOD; what an affront is this to him who hath deſerved ſo infinitely well of us, and beyond the beſt and utmoſt that we can poſſibly do?

Beſides, that there is a peculiar kind of grace and lovelineſs in the worthy and excellent actions of young perſons, great things being hardly expected from them at that age. Early habits of virtue, like new clothes upon a young and comely body, ſit very gracefully upon a ſtraight and well-ſhap'd mind, and do mightily become it.

As there is joy in heaven at the converſion of a great and old ſinner, ſo it cannot but be a very delightful ſpectacle to GOD and angels, and to the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect, to ſee a young perſon, beſieged by powerful temptations on every ſide, to acquit himſelf glorioufly, and reſolutely to hold out againſt the moſt violent aſſaults: to behold one in the prime and flower of his age, that is courted

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by pleaſures and honours, by the devil and all the bewitching vanities of this world, to reject all theſe and to cleave ſteadfaſtly to GOD: nay, to frown upon all theſe temptations and to look down upon them with indignation and ſcorn, and to ſay, let thoſe dote upon theſe things who know no better: let them adore ſenſual pleaſures and lying vanities, who are ignorant of the ſincere and ſolid pleaſures of religion and virtue: let them run into the arms of temptation who can forget GOD their creator, their preſerver, and the guide of their youth: as for me, I will ſerve the LORD, and will employ my whole time either innocently or uſefully, in ſerving GOD, and in doing good to men who are made after the image of GOD. This work ſhall take up my whole life, there ſhall be no void or empty ſpace in it; I will endeavour, as much as poſſibly I can, that there may be no gap or breach in it for the devil and his temptations to enter in: LORD, I will be thine, I have choſen thee for my happineſs and my portion for ever: "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there "is none upon earth that I deſire beſides thee. Lo! "they that are far from thee ſhall periſh: but it is "good for me to draw near to GOD," to begin and end my days in his fear and to his glory.

Fifthly and laſtly, this age of our life may, for any thing we know, be the only time we may have for this purpoſe; and if we caſt off the thoughts of GOD and defer the buſineſs of religion to old age, intending, as we pretend, to ſet about it at that time, we may be cut off before that time comes, "and "turned into hell with the people that forget GOD."

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The work of religion is the moſt neceſſary of all other, and muſt be done one time or other, or we are certainly undone for ever. We cannot begin it too ſoon, but we may eaſily delay it too long; and then we are miſerable paſt all recovery. He that would not venture his immortal ſoul, and put his everlaſting happineſs upon the greateſt hazard and uncertainty, muſt make religion his firſt buſineſs and care, muſt think of God betimes "and remember his creator "in the days of his youth."

I have now done with the three things which I propoſed to conſider from theſe words. The Inferences from this whole diſcourſe ſhall be theſe two,

Firſt, to perſuade thoſe that are young to remember God their creator, and to engage in the ways of religion and virtue betimes.

Secondly, to urge thoſe who have neglected this firſt and beſt opportunity of their lives, to repent quickly and return to a better mind; leſt the opportunity be loſt for ever, and their caſe becomes deſperate and paſt remedy.

Firſt, to perſuade thoſe that are young to remember God their creator betimes, and to engage early in the ways of religion and virtue. Do not ſuffer yourſelves to be cheated and bewitched by ſenſual ſatisfaction, and to be deſtroyed by eaſe and proſperity. Let not a perpetual tenor of health and pleaſure ſoften and diſſolve your ſpirits, and baniſh all wiſe and ſerious thoughts out of your minds. Be not ſo fooliſh and unworthy, as to think that you have a privilege to forget God when he is moſt mindful of you; "when the candle of the Lord ſhines about "your tabernacle," and you are enjoying the health, and ſtrength, and ſweetneſs of life.

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No man knows what he does, and what an invaluable treaſure he prodigally waſtes, when he lets ſlip this golden ſeaſon and opportunity of his life; whilſt he is yet innocent and untainted with ſin and vice, and his mind is clear of all bad impreſſions, and capable of the beſt; not enſlaved to evil, and at liberty to do well.

Conſider that the ways of religion and virtue are nothing ſo difficult and unpleaſant now, as they will be hereafter: and that the longer you forget GOD, and the more you are eſtranged from him, the more unwilling you will be to think of him and to return to him: that your luſts will every day gain more ſtrength, and your hearts by degrees will contract ſuch a ſtiffneſs and hardneſs that it will be no eaſy matter to work upon them.

Therefore "remember your creator in the days "of your youth: to day, whilſt it is called to day, "leſt any of you be hardened through the deceitfulneſs of ſin." When will you think of beginning a good courſe, if not now? You have a great work before you, which cannot be done in a little time, which cannot be begun and finiſhed at once. Your whole life is no more than ſufficient for it; to do it to the beſt advantage, and as it ought to be done. Do not then think of crowding it into a corner of your life, much leſs of putting it off to the very end of it: "when that night comes, no man can "work."

Conſider further; if we will deny GOD the hearty and vigorous ſervice of our beſt days, how can we expect that he will accept the faint and flattering devotions of old age? Wiſe men are wont to forecaſt

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and provide ſome ſtay and comfort for themſelves againſt the evils and infirmities of that time; that they may have ſomething to lean upon in their weakneſs, ſomething to mitigate and allay the troubles and afflictions of that dark and gloomy evening: that what they cannot enjoy of preſent pleaſure and ſatisfaction may in ſome meaſure be made up to them in comfortable reflexions upon the paſt actions of a holy and innocent, an uſeful and well-ſpent life. SERM. LIV.

But on the other hand, if we have neglected religion, and forgotten GOD days without number; if we have lived an ungodly and vicious life, we have treaſured up ſo much guilt and remorſe, ſo many aggravations of our ſorrow and anguiſh againſt an evil day; and have fooliſhly contrived to make our burden then heavieſt, when we are leaſt able to ſtand under it; and have provided and laid in infinite matter for repentance, when there is hardly any ſpace and opportunity left for the exerciſe of it; and when we ſhall be utterly diſheartned from ſetting about ſo vaſt a work, of which we can ſee no end; and yet have ſo little time for it, that if we do any thing at all in it we ſhall be forced to huddle it up in ſo much haſte and confuſion, as will, I doubt, ſignify but very little either to our preſent comfort, or our future happineſs.

Conſider this in time, all ye that forget GOD in the day of your proſperity and in the beſt age of your life, and yet when the day of affliction and the infirmities of age come upon you, you would be glad then to have GOD mindful of you, and merciful to you. But if thou wouldſt not have him "caſt thee off in "thine old age, and forſake thee when thy ſtrength "fails,

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" fails, do thou remember him in the days of thy " youth," in the prime and vigour of thine age: " for this is the acceptable time, this is the day of " ſalvation."

Therefore " acquaint thyſelf with him, and re- " member him NOW; in the days of thy youth;" defer not ſo neceſſary a work, no not for one moment: begin it juſt now, that ſo thou mayeſt have made ſome good progreſs in it " before the evil days come; " before the ſun, and the moon, and the ſtars be " darkened," and all the comforts and joys of life be fled and gone.

Be not deceived, O man, whoſoever thou art; " for GOD is not mocked." He will not be put off by us " with the days in which we ourſelves have no " pleaſure." Offer up thyſelf a living ſacrifice and not a carcaſe, if thou wouldſt be accepted. Do not provoke and affront the living GOD by offering up to him faint ſpirits, and feeble hands, and dim eyes, and a dead heart. He hath been bountiful to us in giving us the beſt bleſſings of life, and all things richly to enjoy; and do we grudge him the moſt valuable part of our lives, " and the years which we " ourſelves have pleaſure in? Do we thus requite the " LORD? fooliſh people and unwiſe!" Is the giver of all good things unworthy to receive from us any thing that is good? " If we offer up the lame in " ſacrifice, is it not evil? and if we offer up the " blind, is it not evil? Offer it now to thy gover- " nor, and try if he will be pleaſed with thee and ac- " cept thy perſon." Hath GOD deſerved ſo ill at our hands, that we ſhould forget and neglect him? and hath the devil deſerved ſo well of us, that we

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ſhould be contented to ſpend the beſt part of our lives in his ſervice, which is perfect ſlavery? Was he our creator, or can he make us happy? Nay, does he not carry on a moſt malicious deſign to make us for ever miſerable?

Secondly, let me urge thoſe who have neglected this firſt and beſt opportunity of their lives to repent quickly and return to a better mind, leſt all opportunity of doing it be loſt for ever, and their caſe become deſperate and paſt remedy. Reſolve to redeem, if it be poſſible, the time which you ſhould have improved: you have ſquander'd away too much already, waſte no more of this precious opportunity of life: you have deferred a neceſſary work too long, delay it no longer. Do not delude yourſelves with vain hopes that this work may be done at any time, and in an inſtant; and that if you can but faſhion your laſt breath into "LORD have mercy upon me," this will prevail with GOD and make atonement for the long courſe of a wicked and ſinful life. What ſtrange thoughts have men of GOD and heaven, what extragant conceits of the little evil of ſin and the great eaſineſs of repentance, that can impoſe upon themſelves at this rate?

Bethink yourſelves better in time, "conſider and "ſhew yourſelves men." What will you do in the day of your diſtreſs, who have neglected GOD in your moſt flouriſhing and proſperous condition? What will you ſay to him in a dying hour, who ſcarce ever had one ſerious thought of him all your life? Can you have the face at that time to beſpeak him in this manner? "LORD, now the world and my luſts have "left me, and I feel myſelf ready to ſink into eternal

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" perdition, I lay hold upon thy mercy to deliver " my ſoul from going down into the pit. I have " heard ſtrange things of thy goodneſs and that thou " art merciful even to a miracle. This is that which " I always truſted to, that after a long life of ſin " and vanity thou wouldſt at laſt be pacified with " a few penitent words and ſighs at the hour of " death. Let me not, I pray thee, be diſappointed " of this hope and put to confuſion."

Is this an addreſs fit to be made to a wiſe man, much leſs to the all-wiſe and juſt judge of the world? and yet this ſeems to be the plain interpretation of the late and forc'd application of a great and habitual ſinner to almighty GOD in his laſt extremity, and when he is juſt giving up the ghoſt and going to appear before his dreadful tribunal.

I ſay again, let no man deceive you with vain words or with vain hopes, or with falſe notions of a ſlight and ſudden repentance: as if heaven were an hoſpital founded on purpoſe to receive all ſick and maimed perſons, that when they can live no longer to the luſts of the fleſh and the ſinful pleaſures of this world, can but put up a cold and formal petition to be admitted there.

No, no, as ſure as GOD is true, they ſhall never ſee the kingdom of GOD, who inſtead of ſeeking it in the firſt place make it their laſt refuge and retreat: and when they find themſelves under the ſentence of death and damnation, only to avoid preſent execution, and ſince there is no other remedy, do at laſt bethink themſelves of getting to heaven, and fall upon their knees to petition the great judge of the world that they may be tranſported thither.

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Can any man in reaſon expect that ſuch a petition will be granted? I tell you nay; but except you repent ſooner, and at a fitter time, and after a better faſhion, you ſhall certainly periſh. As much as GOD deſires the ſalvation of men, he will not proſtitute heaven, and ſet the gates of it wide open to thoſe who only fly to it in extremity, but never ſought it in good earneſt, nor indeed do now care for it or deſire it for any other reaſon, but to excuſe them from going to hell. They have no value for heaven, becauſe they are in no ways fit for it, but yet they think hell to be the worſe place of the two.

The ever bleſſed GOD is himſelf abundantly ſufficient for his own happineſs, and does not need our company to make any addition to it: nor yet is heaven ſo deſolate a place, or ſo utterly void of inhabitants, that like ſome newly diſcovered plantation it ſhould be glad to receive the moſt vile and profligate perſons, the ſcum and refuſe of mankind. There are an innumerable company of glorious angels, much nobler creatures than the beſt of men, to people thoſe bleſſed regions. "Thouſands of "thouſands continually ſtand before GOD, and ten "thouſand times ten thouſands miniſter unto "him."

We do abſolutely ſtand in need of GOD to make us happy, but he hath no need of us to help him to be ſo. GOD indeed is ſo good, as to deſire our happineſs as earneſtly as if it were neceſſary to his own: but he is happy in and from himſelf, and without him it is impoſſible we ſhould be happy, nay, we muſt of neceſſity be for ever miſerable.

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To conclude; if we would have GOD to accept us in a dying hour, and our bleſſed SAVIOUR "to "remember us now he is in his kingdom," let us think of him betimes, and "acquaint ourſelves with "him that we may be at peace: NOW before the evil "days come, and the years draw nigh when we "ſhall ſay we have no pleaſure in them."

"O that men were wiſe, that they underſtood "this, that they would conſider their latter end." Which GOD of his infinite goodneſs grant that we may all ſeriouſly lay to heart, in this our day; and may learn betimes "ſo to number our days, that "we may apply our hearts to wiſdom:" for his mercies ſake in JESUS CHRIST, to whom with the FATHER and the HOLY GHOST, be all honour and glory, now and for ever. Amen.

THE

THE

RULE of FAITH:

Or an ANSWER to the

TREATISE of Mr. *J. S.*

Entitled,

SURE-FOOTING, &c.

To my honoured and learned FRIEND

Dr. *STILLINGFLEET.*

SIR,

I *Have, with a great deal of pleaſure and ſatisfaction, read over your* book, *which I find in every part anſwerable to its title, viz.* A rational account of the grounds of the proteſtant religion. *And now I thank you for it, not only as a private favour, but a publick benefit. No ſooner had I peruſed it, but I met with a* diſcourſe *entitled,* Sure-footing in chriſtianity. *And although I have no ſmall prejudice againſt books with conceited titles, yet I was tempted to look into this, becauſe it pretended to contain* animadverſions on ſome paſſages *in your book, which I had ſo lately read over. Upon peruſal of which* animadverſions, *I found that the* author *of them had attacked (and in his own opinion confuted) a page or two in your book. This drew me on to take a view of his main* diſcourſes: *which, becauſe they are in great vogue among ſome of his own party, and do with an unuſual kind of confi-*

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dence and oſtentation pretend to the neweſt and moſt exact faſhion *of writing* controverſy, *as being all along* demonſtrative *and built upon* ſelf-evident principles; *therefore I reſolved throughly to examine them, that I might diſcover (if I could) upon what ſo firm and ſolid foundations this high and mighty confidence was built.*

But before I had entered upon this undertaking, I met with a letter *from the author of* ſure-footing *to his* anſwerer, *directing him how he ought to demean himſelf in his anſwer. In which* letter, *though there be many things liable to great exception, yet becauſe I am unwilling to be diverted from the main* queſtion, *I ſhall not argue with him about any of thoſe matters; only take leave to uſe the ſame liberty in managing my anſwer, which he hath aſſumed to himſelf in preſcribing laws to me about it: therefore, without taking any farther notice of his* letter, *I addreſs myſelf to his* book.

THE RULE of FAITH.

PART I.

The explication and state of the question.

SECT. I.

§. 1. THE question he propounds to himself to debate, is, "What is the rule of "faith?" In order to the resolution whereof he endeavours, The explication of the Terms of the Question.

First, to fix the true notion of these two terms, RULE and FAITH: which way of proceeding I cannot but allow to be very proper and reasonable, but I can by no means think his explication of those terms to be sufficient. He tells us, "That a "rule is that which is able to regulate, or guide "him that useth it:" in which description, as in many other passages of this book, he is plainly guilty of that which he taxeth in Mr.* Whitby, that is, "the confounding of a rule, by making Regulating "and Guiding to be equivalent words." But for this I am no farther concerned than to take notice of it by the way: the fault which I find in this definition is, that it doth not make the thing plainer than it was before; so that no man is the wiser for it, nor one jot nearer knowing what a rule is. He pretends to tell Englishmen what a

* P. 180.

PART I.

rule is; and for their clearer underſtanding of this word, he explains it by a word leſs removed from the latin, "a rule is that which is able to regu-"late him that uſeth it;" juſt as if a man ſhould go about to explain what a lawgiver is, by ſaying, "he is one that hath the power of legiſlation." Of the two he had much better have ſaid, that a rule is a thing that is able to rule him that uſeth it, though this be nothing but an explication of the ſame word by it ſelf.

§ 2. Not much better is his explication of the term faith, which he tells us, in the common ſenſe of mankind, is the ſame with believing. * He declared indeed beforehand, "that he did not in-"tend to give rigorous ſchool-definitions of either "this or the former word;" and (to do him right) he hath not in the leaſt ſwerv'd from his intention. It were to be wiſh'd he had prefac'd ſome ſuch thing to his demonſtrations; for the reader will find, that they are not a whit more rigorous than his definitions; the latter of which doth very much reſemble the country-man's way of defining, who being ask'd by his neighbour what an invaſion was, after ſome ſtudy told him very gravely, "that an "invaſion was as if he ſhould ſay an invaſion." In like manner Mr. S. tells us, "that faith (or "which is all one, belief) is the ſame with be-"lieving;" which, in my apprehenſion, is but a country definition, unleſs the interpoſing of thoſe ſolemn words [in the common ſenſe of mankind] may be thought to mend the matter. This puts me in mind of what Mr. S. ſays in his * tranſition (as he calls it) where he gives the reader an account what

* P. 4.

* P. 159.

feats

feats he hath done in his book: "he will ſee (ſays he) I take my riſe at the meaning of the words "Rule and Faith; this known, I eſtabliſh my firſt "principles in this preſent matter to be theſe, viz. "a rule is a rule, faith is faith." This is the right ſelf-evident method he talks ſo much of, and his principles agree admirably well with his definitions. If he had but proceeded in the ſame method, and added, "that a rule of faith is a rule of "faith; that oral tradition is oral tradition; and "that to ſay, oral tradition is the rule of faith, is "as much as to ſay oral tradition is the rule of "faith," the whole buſineſs had been concluded without any more ado; and I think no body would have gone about to confute him. SECT. I.

§ 3. Rejecting then his way of definition as inept and frivolous, and no ways tending to give a man a clearer notion of things; I ſhall endeavour to explain a little better (if I can) the meaning of theſe terms.

A rule (when we ſpeak of a rule of faith) is a metaphorical word, which in its firſt and proper ſenſe, being applied to material and ſenſible things, is the meaſure according to which we judge of the ſtraightneſs and crookedneſs of things; and from hence it is transferred by analogy to things moral or intellectual. A moral rule is the meaſure according to which we judge whether a thing be good or evil; and this kind of Rule is that which is commonly called a law, and the agreement or diſagreement of our actions to this rule, is ſuitably to the metaphor, called rectitude or obliquity. An intellectual rule is the meaſure according to which we judge

PART I.

judge whether a thing be true or falſe; and this is either general or more particular. Common notions, and the acknowledged principles of reaſon, are that general rule, according to which we judge whether a thing be true or falſe. The particular principles of every ſcience are the more particular rules according to which we judge whether things in that ſcience be true or falſe. So that the general notion of a rule is, that it is "a meaſure, by "the agreement or diſagreement to which we judge "of all things of that kind to which it belongs."

§ 4. Faith, though both among ſacred and profane writers it be uſed many times more generally, for a perſuaſion or aſſent of the mind to any thing wrought in us by any kind of argument; yet, as it is a term of art uſed by divines, it ſignifies that particular kind of aſſent which is wrought in us by teſtimony or authority: ſo that divine faith, which we are now ſpeaking of, is an aſſent to a thing upon the teſtimony or authority of GOD; or, which is all one, "an aſſent to a truth upon "divine revelation."

§ 5. A rule of faith is the meaſure, according to which we judge what matters we are to aſſent to, as revealed to us by GOD, and what not. And more particularly, the rule of chriſtian faith is the meaſure, according to which we are to judge what we ought to aſſent to, as the doctrine revealed by CHRIST to the world, and what not.

§ 6. So that this queſtion, "What is the rule "of chriſtian faith?" ſuppoſeth a doctrine revealed by CHRIST to the world; and that that doctrine was intelligibly and entirely delivered by CHRIST

to

to his apoſtles, and ſufficient confirmation given to it; that this doctrine was in the ſame manner publiſhed to the world by the apoſtles, who likewiſe gave ſufficient evidence of the truth of it. All this is neceſſarily ſuppoſed in the queſtion: for it would be in vain to enquire whether this or that be the rule of chriſtian faith, if ſuch a thing as the chriſtian faith were not firſt ſuppoſed. When therefore we enquire what is the rule of chriſtian faith? the meaning of that enquiry is, by what way and means the knowledge of CHRIST's doctrine is conveyed certainly down to us, who live at the diſtance of ſo many ages from the time of its firſt delivery: for this being known, we have the rule of faith; that is, a meaſure by which we may judge what we are to aſſent to, as the doctrine of CHRIST, and what not. So that when any queſtion ariſeth about any particular propoſition, whether this be part of CHRIST's doctrine, we may be able by this rule to reſolve it.

SECT. II.

§ 1. THE next thing to be conſidered, is his reſolution of this queſtion; by which we ſhall know what his opinion is concerning the rule of faith; for that being known, the controverſy between us will eaſily be ſtated. Mr. S's rule of faith.

His opinion in general is, that oral or practical tradition (in oppoſition to writing, or any other way that can be aſſigned) is the rule of faith. By oral or practical tradition, he means "* a delivery "down from hand to hand (by words, and a con- "ſtant courſe of frequent and viſible actions, con- "formable * P. 41.

PART I. "formable to thoſe words) of the ſenſe and faith of "forefathers."

§ 2. Now, that I may bring the controverſy between us to a clear ſtate, I am firſt to take a more particular view of his opinion concerning the rule of faith, that ſo I may the better underſtand how much he attributes to oral tradition, and what to the ſcriptures or written tradition. And then I am to lay down the proteſtant rule of faith, that ſo it may appear how far we agree, and how far we differ. The ſum of what he attributes to oral tradition, ſo far as can be collected out of ſo obſcure and confuſed a diſcourſe, may be reduced to theſe five heads.

§ 3. Firſt, that the doctrine of chriſtian religion was delivered by CHRIST to the apoſtles, and by them publiſhed to the world; and that the age which firſt received it from the apoſtles, delivered it as they received it without any change or corruption to their children, and they to theirs, and ſo it went on ſolely by this way of oral tradition. This is the ſum of his explication of tradition, diſc. 5th.

§ 4. Secondly, that this way alone is not only ſufficient to convey this doctrine down to all ages certainly, and without any alteration; but it is the only poſſible way that can be imagined of conveying down a doctrine ſecurely from one age to another. And this is the natural reſult of his diſcourſe about the properties of a rule of faith: for if the true properties of the rule of faith do belong to oral tradition, then it is a ſufficient means; and if thoſe properties do ſolely and eſſentially appertain to it, and

and are incompatible to any thing elſe (as he endeavours to prove) then it is impoſſible there ſhould be any other way. SECT. II.

§ 5. Thirdly, that it is impoſſible this means ſhould fail or miſs of its end; that is, the doctrine of CHRIST being once put into this way of conveyance, it can neither ceaſe to deſcend, nor be at any time corrupted or changed in its deſcent. This is that which his demonſtrations pretend to prove.

§ 6. Fourthly, that the infallibility of oral tradition, or the impoſſibility of its failing, is a firſt and ſelf-evident principle. This he frequently aſſerts throughout his book.

§ 7. Fifthly, that this way of oral tradition hath *de facto* in all ages been acknowledged by chriſtians, as the only way and means whereby the doctrine of chriſtianity hath been conveyed down to them. And this is that which he attempts to prove from the conſent of authority.

§ 8. As for the ſcriptures, he grants them indeed to have been written by men divinely inſpired, and to contain a divine doctrine, even the ſame which is delivered by oral tradition; ſo he tells us, "* 'Tis* P. 117. "certain the apoſtles taught the ſame doctrine they "writ." But then he denies it to be of any uſe without oral tradition, becauſe neither the letter nor ſenſe of it can without that be aſcertained: ſo he ſaith in his letter to Dr. Caſaubon, "* As for* P. 137. "the ſcriptures (aſcertaining their letter and ſenſe, "which is done by tradition) 'tis clear they are of "incomparable value; not only for the divine "doctrine contained in them, but alſo for many "particular paſſages, whoſe ſource or firſt atteſta-

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PART I.

" tion not being univerſal, nor their nature much " practical, might poſſibly have been loſt in their " conveyance down by tradition." Where, though he gives the ſcriptures very good words, it is to be underſtood, provided they will be ſubordinate, and acknowledge that they owe their ſenſe and their being intelligible and uſeful to oral tradition. For if any man ſhall preſume to ſay, that this book hath any certain ſenſe without oral tradition, or that GOD can write plainly and intelligibly, and that this book which he hath endited is ſo written, and doth not depend upon tradition for its ſenſe and interpretation; then the moſt ſcurrilous language is not bad enough for the ſcriptures: then what are thoſe ſacred writ-

*Append. 4th. pag. 319.

† P. 68.

ings, but " * ink variouſly figured in a book †, un- " ſenſed characters, waxen-natured words, not yet " ſenſed, nor having any certain interpreter, but fit " to be play'd upon diverſly by quirks of wit? that " is, apt to blunder and confound, but to clear little " or nothing." Theſe, with many other diſgraceful terms, he very liberally beſtows upon the divine oracles; the conſideration whereof, did it not miniſter too much horror, would afford ſome comfort; for by this kind of rude uſage, ſo familiar with him towards his adverſaries, one may reaſonably conjecture, that he doth not reckon the ſcriptures among his friends.

§ 9. And whereas he ſaith, " That the ſcriptures " have preſerved many particular paſſages, which, " becauſe their ſource or firſt atteſtation was not uni- " verſal, nor their nature much practical, might " poſſibly have been loſt in their conveyance down by " tradition;" this is impoſſible, according to his hypotheſis:

SECT. II.

potheſis: for if neither the ſcripture's letter, nor the certain ſenſe of it, as to the main body of chriſtian doctrine, could have been ſecured without oral tradition; that is, if we could not have known that thoſe paſſages which contain the main points of CHRIST's doctrine, either had been written by men divinely inſpired, or what the ſenſe of them was, but from the conſonancy and agreement of thoſe paſſages with the doctrine which was orally preached by the apoſtles; how can we be certain either of the letter or ſenſe of other particular paſſages which muſt neceſſarily want this confirmation from oral tradition, becauſe "their "firſt atteſtation was not univerſal, nor their nature "much practical?" Nay, his diſcourſe plainly implies, that we can have no ſecurity at all, either of the letter or ſenſe of any other parts of ſcripture, but only thoſe which are coincident with the main body of chriſtian doctrine, as is evident from theſe words, "*Tradition eſtabliſhed, the church is provided of a "certain and infallible rule to preſerve a copy of the "ſcriptures letter truly ſignificative of CHRIST's "ſenſe, as far as it is coincident with the main body "of chriſtian doctrine preached at firſt;" becauſe "ſenſe writ in mens hearts by tradition, can eaſily "guide them to correct the alteration of the out-"ward letter." This I perceive plainly is the thing they would be at, they would correct the outward letter of ſcripture by ſenſe written in their hearts; and then, inſtead of leaving out the ſecond commandment, they would change it into a precept of giving due worſhip to images, according to the council of Trent; and a thouſand other alterations they muſt make in the bible, to make it truly ſignificative of

* P. 116.

PART I. the ſenſe of their church. But ſurely the outward letter of other paſſages of ſcripture, which were not intended to ſignify points of faith, is equally liable to alterations: and yet the church is not by tradition provided of any way to correct theſe alterations when they happen; becauſe tradition doth, as this corollary implies, only furniſh the church with a certain and infallible rule of preſerving a copy of the ſcriptures letter, ſo far as it is coincident with the main body of chriſtian doctrine.

P. 117. § 10. Again, he tells us, "* Tradition eſtabliſhed, "the church is provided of a certain and infallible "rule to interpret ſcripture-letter by, ſo as to arrive "certainly at CHRIST's ſenſe, as far as the letter con- "cerns the body of chriſtian doctrine preached at "firſt, or points requiſite to ſalvation." So that whatever he may attribute to ſcripture for faſhion's ſake, and to avoid calumny with the vulgar, as he ſays very ingenuouſly in his explication of the 15th corollary; nevertheleſs 'tis plain, that according to his own hypotheſis, he cannot but look upon it as perfectly uſeleſs and pernicious. That 'tis altogether uſeleſs, according to his hypotheſis, is plain; for the main body of chriſtian doctrine is ſecurely conveyed to us without it, and it can give no kind of confirmation to it, becauſe it receives all its confirmation from it; only the church is ever and anon put to a great deal of trouble to correct the alteration of the outward letter, by tradition and ſenſe written in their hearts. And as for all other parts of ſcripture which are not coincident with the main body of chriſtian doctrine, we can have no certainty either that the outward letter is true; nor, if we could, can

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we possibly arrive at any certain sense of them. And that it is intolerably pernicious, according to his hypothesis, is plain, because "* every silly and upstart here- "sy fathers itself upon it;" and when men leave tradition (as he supposeth all hereticks do) the scripture is the most dangerous engine that could have been invented, being to such persons only "* waxen-natur'd "words, not sensed, nor having any certain inter- "preter; but fit to be play'd upon diversly by quirks "of wit; that is, apt to blunder and confound, but "to clear little or nothing." And indeed, if his hypothesis were true, the scriptures might well deserve all the contemptuous language which he useth against them; and * Mr. White's comparison of them with Lilly's almanack, would not only be pardonable, but proper; and (unless he added it out of prudence, and for the peoples sake, whom he may think too superstitiously conceited of those books) he might have spared that cold excuse which he makes for using this similitude, "that it was agreeable rather to the "impertinency of the objection than the dignity of "the subject." Certain it is, if these men are true to their own principles, that notwithstanding the high reverence and esteem pretended to be born by them and their church to the scriptures, they must heartily despise them, and wish them out of the way: and even look upon it as a great oversight of the divine providence to trouble his church with a book, which, if their discourse be of any consequence, can stand catholicks in no stead at all, and is so dangerous and mischievous a weapon in the hands of hereticks.

SECT. II.

* P. 40.

* P. 68.

* Apology for tradition, pag. 165.

SECT.

SECT. III.

The protestant doctrine concerning the rule of faith.

§ 1. HAving thus taken a view of his opinion, and considered how much he attributes to oral tradition, and how little to the scriptures; before I assail his hypothesis, I shall lay down the protestant rule of faith; not that so much is necessary for the answering of his book, but that he may have no colour of objection, that I proceed altogether in the destructive way, and overthrow his principle, as he calls it, without substituting another in its room. The opinion then of the protestants concerning the rule of faith, is this in general, that those books which we call the holy scriptures, are the means whereby the christian doctrine hath been brought down to us. And that he may now clearly understand this, together with the grounds of it (which in reason he ought to have done before he had forsaken us) I shall declare more particularly in these following propositions.

§ 2. First, that the doctrine of christian religion was by CHRIST delivered to the apostles, and by them first preached to the world, and afterwards by them committed to writing; which writings, or books, have been transmitted from one age to another down to us: so far I take to be granted by our present adversaries. That the christian doctrine was by CHRIST delivered to the apostles, and by them published to the world, is part of their own hypothesis. That this doctrine was afterwards by the apostles committed to writing, he also grants, corol. 29. "* 'Tis certain the apostles taught the same doctrine they "writ;"

* P. 117.

" writ ;" and if ſo, it muſt be as certain that they writ the ſame doctrine which they taught. I know it is the general tenet of the papiſts, that the ſcriptures do not contain the entire body of chriſtian doctrine, but that beſides the doctrines contained in ſcripture, there are alſo others brought down to us by oral or unwritten tradition. But Mr. S. who ſuppoſeth the whole doctrine of chriſtian religion to be certainly conveyed down to us ſolely by oral tradition, doth not any where, that I remember, deny that all the ſame doctrine is contained in the ſcriptures ; only he denies the ſcriptures to be a means ſufficient to convey this doctrine to us with certainty, ſo that we can by them be infallibly aſſured what is CHRIST's doctrine, and what not. Nay, he ſeems in that paſſage I laſt cited to grant this, in ſaying that the apoſtles did both teach and write the ſame doctrine. I am ſure Mr. White (whom he follows very cloſely through his whole book) does not deny this, in his apology for tradition ; where he ſaith, " * that it is not the ca- " tholick poſition, that all its doctrines are not con- " tained in the ſcriptures." And that thoſe writings or books which we call the holy ſcriptures, have been tranſmitted down to us, is unqueſtionable matter of fact, and granted univerſally by the papiſts, as to all thoſe books which are owned by proteſtants for canonical.

SECT. III.

* P. 171.

§ 3. Secondly, that the way of writing is a ſufficient means to convey a doctrine to the knowledge of thoſe who live in times very remote from the age of its firſt delivery. According to his hypotheſis, there is no poſſible way of conveying a doctrine with certainty and ſecurity beſides that of oral tradition ; the falſhood

PART II.

falſhood of which will ſufficiently appear, when I ſhall have ſhewn, that the true properties of a rule of faith do agree to the ſcriptures, and not to oral tradition. In the mean time I ſhall only offer this to his conſideration, that whatever can be orally delivered in plain and intelligible words, may be written in the ſame words; and that a writing or book which is publick, and in every one's hand, may be conveyed down with at leaſt as much certainty and ſecurity, and with as little danger of alteration, as an oral tradition. And if ſo, I underſtand not what can render it impoſſible for a book to convey down a doctrine to the knowledge of after-ages. Beſides, if he had looked well about him, he could not but have apprehended ſome little inconvenience in making that an eſſential part of his hypotheſis, which is contradicted by plain and conſtant experience: for that any kind of doctrine may be ſufficiently conveyed, by books, to the knowledge of after-ages, provided thoſe books be but written intelligibly, and preſerved from change and corruption in the conveyance, (both which I ſhall be ſo bold as to ſuppoſe poſſible) is as little doubted by the generality of mankind, as that there are books. And ſurely we chriſtians cannot think it impoſſible to convey a doctrine to poſterity by books, when we conſider that GOD himſelf pitched upon this way for conveyance of the doctrine of the jewiſh religion to after-ages; becauſe it is not likely that ſo wiſe an agent ſhould pitch upon a means whereby it was impoſſible he ſhould attain his end.

§. 4. Thirdly, that the books of ſcripture are ſufficiently plain, as to all things neceſſary to be believed and practiſed. He that denies this, ought in

reaſon

reaſon to inſtance in ſome neceſſary point of faith, or matter of practice, which is not in ſome place of ſcripture or other plainly delivered. For it is not a ſufficient objection to ſay, " * that the greateſt " wits among the proteſtants differ about the ſenſe " of thoſe texts, wherein the generality of them " ſuppoſe the divinity of CHRIST to be plainly " and clearly expreſſed;" becauſe, if nothing were to be accounted ſufficiently plain, but what it is impoſſible a great wit ſhould be able to wreſt to any other ſenſe, not only the ſcriptures but all other books, and (which is worſt of all to him that makes this objection) all oral tradition would fall into uncertainty. Doth the traditionary church pretend that the doctrine of CHRIST's divinity is conveyed down to her by oral tradition more plainly than it is expreſſed in ſcripture? I would fain know what plainer words ſhe ever uſed to expreſs this point of faith by, than what the ſcripture uſeth, which expreſly calls him " GOD, the true GOD, GOD over " all, bleſſed for evermore." If it be ſaid, that thoſe who deny the divinity of CHRIST have been able to evade theſe and all other texts of ſcripture, but they could never elude the definitions of the church in that matter; it is eaſily anſwered, that the ſame arts would equally have eluded both; but there was no reaſon why they ſhould trouble themſelves ſo much about the latter; for why ſhould they be ſolicitous to wreſt the definitions of councils, and conform them to their own opinion, who had no regard to the church's authority? if thoſe great wits (as he calls them) had believed the ſayings of ſcripture to be of no greater authority than the de-

SECT. III.

P. 38. 39.

3.

PART. I. finitions of councils, they would have anſwered texts of ſcripture, as they have done the definitions of councils; not by endeavouring to interpret them to another ſenſe, but by downright denying their authority. So that it ſeems that oral tradition is liable to the ſame inconvenience with the written, as to this particular.

§. 5. And of this I ſhall give him a plain inſtance in two great wits of their church, the preſent pope, and Mr. White; the one the head of the traditionary church, as Mr. S. calls it; the other the great maſter of the traditionary doctrine. Theſe two great wits, the pope and Mr. White, notwithſtanding the plainneſs of oral tradition, and the impoſſibility of being ignorant of it, or miſtaking it, have yet been ſo unhappy as to differ about ſeveral points of faith; inſomuch that Mr. White is unkindly cenſured for it at Rome, and perhaps here in England the pope ſpeeds no better; however, the difference continues ſtill ſo wide, that Mr. White hath thought fit to diſobey the ſummons of his chief paſtor, and like a prudent man, rather to write againſt him here out of harm's way, than to venture the infallibility of plain oral tradition for the doctrines he maintains, againſt a practical tradition which they have at Rome of killing hereticks.

Methinks Mr. S. might have ſpared his brags, "that he hath evinced from clear reaſon, * that it is "far more impoſſible to make a man not to be, "than not to know what is riveted into his ſoul "by ſo oft repeated ſenſations, (as the chriſtian faith "is by oral and practical tradition) and that it ex- "ceeds all the power of nature (abſtracting from the "caſes of madneſs and violent diſeaſe) to blot "know-

* P. 54.

" knowledge, thus fix'd, out of the ſoul of one SECT. III.
" ſingle believer; inſomuch, that ſooner may all
" mankind periſh, than the regulative virtue of
" tradition miſcarry; nay, ſooner may the ſinews of
" entire nature, by overſtraining, crack, and ſhe
" loſe all her activity and motion, that is, herſelf,
" than one ſingle part of that innumerable multi-
" tude which integrate the vaſt teſtification, which
" we call tradition, can poſſibly be violated;" when
after he hath told us, " * that the city of Rome
" was bleſt with more vigorous cauſes to imprint * P. 116.
" CHRIST's doctrine at firſt, and recommend it
" to the next age, than were found any where elſe;
" and conſequently that the ſtream of tradition, in
" its ſource and firſt putting into motion, was
" more particularly vigorous there than in any other
" ſee; and that the chief paſtor of that ſee hath a
" particular title to infallibility built upon tradition,
" above any other paſtor whatſoever; not to dilate
" on the particular aſſiſtances to that biſhop, ſpring-
" ing out of his divinely conſtituted office:" when,
I ſay, after all this quaint reaſoning and rumbling
rhetorick about the infallibility of oral tradition,
and the particular infallibility of the biſhop of
Rome built on tradition, we cannot but remember,
that this great oracle of oral tradition the pope, and
this great maſter of it Mr. White, who is ſo pecu-
liarly skill'd in the rule of faith, have ſo manifeſt-
ly declar'd themſelves to differ in points of
faith. For that the pope and his congregation ge-
neral at Rome, have condemn'd all his books for
this reaſon, becauſe " * they contain ſeveral propo-
" ſitions manifeſtly heretical," is a ſign that theſe
two

* Mr. *Wh. Exetaſis*, P. 9.

PART. I. two great wits do not very well hit it in matters of faith; and either that they do not both agree in the same rule of faith, or that one of them does not rightly understand it, or not follow it. And now, why may not that which Mr. S. unjustly says concerning the use of scripture, be upon this account justly applied to the business of oral tradition?

P. 39. "* If we see two such eminent wits among the papists "(the pope and Mr. White) making use of the self- "same, and as they conceive, the best advantages "their rule of faith gives them; and availing them- "selves the best they can by acquired skill, yet dif- "fer about matters of faith; what certainty can we "undertakingly promise to weaker heads, that is, to "the generality of the papists," in whom the governors of the church do professedly cherish ignorance for the increasing of their devotion?

§ 6. Fourthly, we have sufficient assurance that the books of scripture are conveyed down to us without any material corruption or alteration. And he that denies this, must either reject the authority of all books, because we cannot be certain whether they be the same now that they were at first; or else, give some probable reason why these should be more liable to corruption than others. But any man that considers things, will easily find that it is much more improbable that these books should have been either wilfully or involuntarily corrupted, in any thing material to faith or a good life, than any other books in the world; whether we consider the peculiar providence of GOD engaged for the preservation of them, or the peculiar circumstances of these books. If they were written by men

divinely

divinely inſpired, and are of uſe to chriſtians, as is acknowledged (at leaſt in words) on all hands, nothing is more credible, than that the ſame divine providence which took care for the publiſhing of them, would likewiſe be concerned to preſerve them entire. And if we conſider the peculiar circumſtances of theſe books, we ſhall find it morally impoſſible that they ſhould have been materially corrupted, becauſe being of univerſal and mighty concernment, and at firſt diffuſed into many hands, and ſoon after tranſlated into moſt languages, and moſt paſſages in them cited in books now extant, and all theſe now agreeing in all matters of importance, we have as great aſſurance as can be had concerning any thing of this nature, that they have not ſuffered any material alteration, and far greater than any man can have concerning the incorruption of their oral tradition, as I ſhall ſhew when I come to anſwer the thing which he calls demonſtration.

§. 7. Fifthly, that *de facto* the ſcripture hath been acknowledged by all chriſtians, in former ages, to be the means whereby the doctrine of CHRIST hath with greateſt certainty been conveyed to them. One good evidence of this is, that the primitive adverſaries of chriſtian religion did always look upon the ſcripture as the ſtandard and meaſure of the chriſtian doctrine, and in all their writing againſt chriſtianity, took that for granted to be the chriſtian faith which was contained in thoſe books; there having not as yet any philoſopher riſen up who had demonſtrated to the world, that a doctrine could not, with ſufficient certainty and clearneſs, be conveyed by writing from one age to another. But how abſurd

PART I.

ſurd had this method of confuting chriſtian religion been, if it had been then the publick profeſſion of chriſtians that the ſcriptures were not the rule of their faith? How eaſy had it been for the fathers, who apologized for, and defended chriſtian religion, to have told them they took a wrong meaſure for their doctrine; for it was not the principle of chriſtians, that their faith was conveyed to them by the ſcriptures, and therefore it was a fond undertaking to attack their religion that way; but if they would effectually argue againſt it, they ought to enquire what that doctrine was which was orally delivered from father to ſon, without which the ſcriptures could ſignify no more to them than an unknown cipher without a key; being of themſelves, without the light of oral tradition, only an heap of unintelligible words, "unſenſed characters, and ink variouſly figured in a "book;" and therefore it was a groſs miſtake in them, to think they could underſtand the chriſtian religion (like their own philoſophy) by reading of thoſe books, or confute it by confuting them. Thus the fathers might have defended their religion; nay they ought in all reaſon to have taken this courſe, and to have appealed from thoſe dead ſenſleſs books to the true rule of faith, the living voice of the church eſſential. But doth Mr. S. find any thing to this purpoſe in the apologies of the fathers? if he hath diſcovered any ſuch matter, he might do well to acquaint the world with it, and make them wiſer; in the mean time, I ſhall inform him what I have found, that the fathers never except againſt that method, but appeal frequently from the ſlanderous reports and miſrepreſentations which

which were made of their doctrine, to the books of scripture, as the true standard of it. SECT. III.

§ 8. Another evidence that christians in all ages since the apostles times, have owned the scriptures for the rule of their faith, is, that the fathers, in their homilies, did use constantly to declare to the people what they were to believe, and what they were to practise out of the scriptures; which had been most absurd and senseless, had they believed not the scriptures but something else to have been the rule of faith and manners. For what could tend more to the seducing of the people from Mr. S's supposed rule of faith, oral tradition, than to make a daily practice of declaring and confirming the doctrines of the christian faith from the scriptures? had the ancient fathers been right for Mr. S's way, they would not have built their doctrine upon scripture; perhaps not have mentioned it, for fear of giving the people an occasion to grow familiar with so dangerous a book; but rather (as their more prudent posterity have done) would have locked it up from the people in an unknown tongue, and have set open the stores of good wholsom traditions; and instead of telling them (as they do most frequently) "thus saith the scripture," would only have told them, "this is the voice of the essential church; "thus it hath been delivered down by hand to us "from our forefathers."

§ 9. I might add for a third evidence, the great malice of the enemies and persecutors of christianity against this book, and their cruel endeavours to extort it out of the hands of christians, and destroy it out of the world, that by this means they might extirpate

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extirpate Christianity. For it seems they thought, that the abolishing of this book would have been the ruin of that religion. But (according to Mr. S's opinion) their malice wanted wit; for had all the bibles in the world been burn'd, christian religion would nevertheless have been entirely preserv'd, and safely transmitted down to us by sense written in mens hearts, with the good help of Mr. S's demonstrations. Nay, their church would have been a great gainer by it; for this occasion and parent of all heresy the scripture being once out of the way, she might have had all in her own hands, and by leading the people in the safe paths of tradition, and consequently of science, might have made them wise enough to obey. Well, but suppose the persecutors of christianity mistook themselves in their design, how came the christians in those days to be so tenacious of this book, that rather than deliver it, they would yield up themselves to torments and death? and why did they look upon those who out of fear delivered up their books, as apostates and renouncers of christianity? and if they had not thought this book to be the great instrument of their faith and salvation, and if it had really been of no greater consideration than Mr. W. and Mr. S. would make it; why should they be so loth to part with a few "unsens'd characters, waxen-natur'd "words, to be play'd upon diversly by quirks "of wit, that is, apt to blunder and confound, "but to clear little or nothing?" Why should they value their lives at so cheap a rate as to throw them away for a few insignificant scrawls, and to shed their blood for "a little ink variously figured in

" in a book?" Did they not know, that the safety of christianity did not depend upon this book? Did no christian then understand that, which (according to Mr. S.) no christian can be ignorant of, viz. that not the scripture, but unmistakable and indefectible oral tradition was the rule of faith? why did they not consider, that though this letter-rule of hereticks had been consumed to ashes, yet their faith would have lain safe, " and been preserved " entire in its * spiritual causes, mens minds, the " noblest pieces in nature?" Some of them indeed did deliver up their books, and were called *traditores*, and I have some ground to believe, that these were the only traditionary christians of that time, and that the rest were confessors and martyrs for the letter-rule. And if this be not evidence enough, that the scriptures have always been acknowledged by christians for the rule of faith, I shall, when I come to examine his testimonies for tradition (with the good leave of his distinction between speculators and testifiers) prove by most express testimony, that it was the general opinion of the fathers, " that the " scriptures are the rule of christian faith;" and then, if his demonstration of the infallibility of tradition will enforce, that as testifiers they must needs have spoken otherwise, who can help it?

* P. 345

SECT. IV.

§ 1. HAving thus laid down the protestant rule of faith, with the grounds of it; all that now remains for me to do towards the clear and full stating

How much protestants allow to oral tradition.

3.

PART I. ſtating of the controverſy between us, is to take notice briefly, and with due limitations,

Firſt, how much the proteſtants do allow to oral tradition.

Secondly, what thoſe things are which Mr. S. thinks fit to attribute to his rule of faith, which we ſee no cauſe to attribute to ours: and when this is done, any one may eaſily diſcern how far we differ.

§ 2. Firſt, how much proteſtants do allow to oral tradition.

1. We grant that oral tradition, in ſome circumſtances, may be a ſufficient way of conveying a doctrine; but withal we deny, that ſuch circumſtances are now in being. In the firſt ages of the world, when the *credenda* or articles of religion, and the *agenda* or precepts of it were but few, and ſuch as had the evidence of natural light; when the world was contracted into a few families in compariſon, and the age of men ordinarily extended to ſix or ſeven hundred years; it is eaſy to imagine, how ſuch a doctrine, in ſuch circumſtances, might have been propagated by oral tradition, without any great change or alterations. Adam lived till Methuſelah was above two hundred years old, Methuſelah lived till Sem was near an hundred, and Sem outlived Abraham: ſo that this tradition need not paſs through more than two hands betwixt Adam and Abraham. But though this way was ſufficient to have preſerved religion in the world, if men had not been wanting to themſelves; yet we find it did not prove effectual: for through the corruption and negligence of men after the flood (if not before) when the world began

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SECT. IV.

to multiply, and the age of man was ſhortned, the knowledge and worſhip of the one true GOD was generally loſt in the world. And ſo far as appears by ſcripture-hiſtory (the only record we have of thoſe times) when GOD called out Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees, the whole world was lapſed into polytheiſm and idolatry. Therefore, for the greater ſecurity of religion afterwards, when the poſterity of Abraham was multiplied into a great nation, the wiſdom of GOD did not think fit to intruſt the doctrine of religion any longer to the fallible and uncertain way of tradition, but committed it to writing. Now that GOD pitched upon this way, after the world had ſadly experienced the unſucceſsfulneſs of the other, ſeems to be a very good evidence that this was the better and more ſecure way; it being the uſual method of the divine diſpenſations not to go backwards, but to move towards perfection, and to proceed from that which is leſs perfect to that which is more. And the apoſtle's * reaſoning concerning the two covenants, is very applicable to theſe two methods of conveying the doctrine of religion; "if "the firſt had been faultleſs, then ſhould no place "have been ſought for a ſecond."

* Hebr. viii. 7.

§ 3. So likewiſe, when CHRIST revealed his doctrine to the world, it was not in his life-time committed to writing; becauſe it was entertained but by a few, who were his diſciples and followers, and who, ſo long as he continued with them, had a living oracle to teach them. After his death, the apoſtles, who were to publiſh this doctrine to the world, were aſſiſted by an infallible ſpirit, ſo as they were ſecured from error and miſtake in the delivery of it. But

PART I. when this extraordinary assistance failed, there was need of some other means to convey it to posterity, that so it might be a fixed and standing rule of faith and manners to the end of the world. To this end the providence of GOD took care to have it committed to writing. And that Mr. S. may see this is not a conjecture of protestants, but the sense of former times, I shall refer him to St. Chrysostom (*homil.* 1. *in Matth.*) who tells us, "That CHRIST left no-"thing in writing to his apostles, but instead there-"of did promise to bestow upon them the grace of "his HOLY SPIRIT, saying, John xiv. He shall "bring all things to your remembrance, *&c.* But "because in progress of time there were many grie-"vous miscarriages both in matter of opinion, and "also of life and manners; therefore it was requi-"site that the memory of doctrine should be "preserved by writing." So long then as the apostles lived, who were thus infallibly assisted, the way of oral tradition was secure, but no longer; nor even then, from the nature of the thing, but from that extraordinary and supernatural assistance which accompanied the deliverers.

§ 4. And therefore it is no good way of argument against the way of tradition by writing, which he lays so much weight upon, * "That the apostles and "their successors went not with books in their hands "to preach and deliver CHRIST's doctrine, but words "in their mouths; and that primitive antiquity "learned their faith by another method, a long time "before many of those books were universally spread "among the vulgar." For what if there was no need of writing this doctrine, whilst those living

* P. 40.

oracles

oracles the apoſtles were preſent with the church? doth it therefore follow that there was no need afterwards when the apoſtles were dead, and that extraordinary and ſupernatural aſſiſtance was ceaſed? If the preachers now-a-days could give us any ſuch aſſurance, and confirm all they preach by ſuch frequent, and publick, and unqueſtionable miracles as the apoſtles did; then we need not examine the doctrines they taught by any other rule, but ought to regulate our belief by what they delivered to us: but ſeeing this is not the caſe, that ought in all reaſon to be the rule of our faith, which hath brought down to us the doctrine of CHRIST with the greateſt certainty; and this I ſhall prove the ſcriptures to have done. SECT. IV.

§ 5. So that in thoſe circumſtances I have mentioned, we allow oral tradition to have been a ſufficient way of conveying a doctrine; but now conſidering the great increaſe of mankind, and the ſhortneſs of man's life in theſe latter ages of the world, and the long tract of time from the apoſtles age down to us, and the innumerable accidents whereby in the ſpace of 1500 years, oral tradition might receive inſenſible alterations, ſo as at laſt to become quite another thing from what it was at firſt, by paſſing through many hands; in which paſſage all the miſtakes and corruptions which (in the ſeveral ages through which it was tranſmitted) did happen, either through ignorance, or forgetfulneſs, or out of intereſt and deſign, are neceſſarily derived into the laſt: ſo that the farther it goes, the more alteration it is liable to; becauſe as it paſſeth along, more errors and corruptions are infuſed into it. I ſay, conſidering all this, we deny, that the doctrine of chriſtian religion could,

PART I. could, with any probable ſecurity and certainty, have been conveyed down to us by the way of oral tradition; and therefore do reaſonably believe, that God foreſeeing this, did in his wiſdom ſo order things, that thoſe perſons who were aſſiſted by an infallible ſpirit in the delivery of this doctrine, ſhould, before they left the world, commit it to writing; which was accordingly done: and by this inſtrument the doctrine of faith hath been conveyed down to us.

§ 6. Secondly, we allow, that tradition oral and written, do give us ſufficient aſſurance that the books of ſcripture which we now have, are the very books which were written by the apoſtles and evangeliſts: nay farther, that oral tradition alone is a competent evidence in this caſe; but withal we deny, that oral tradition is therefore to be accounted the rule of faith.

The general aſſurance that we have concerning books written long ago, that they are ſo ancient, and were written by thoſe whoſe names they bear, is a conſtant and uncontroll'd tradition of this, tranſmitted from one age to another; partly orally, and partly by the teſtimony of other books. Thus much is common to ſcripture with other books. But then the ſcriptures have this peculiar advantage above other books, that being of a greater and more univerſal concernment, they have been more common and in every body's hands, more read and ſtudied than any other books in the world whatſoever; and conſequently, they have a more univerſal and better-grounded atteſtation. Moreover, they have not only been owned univerſally in all ages by chriſtians (except three or four books of them, which for ſome time were queſtioned by ſome churches, but have

ſince

since been generally received) but the greatest enemies of our religion, the jews and heathens, never questioned the antiquity of them, but have always taken it for granted, that they were the very books which the apostles writ. And this is as great an assurance as we can have concerning any antient book, without a particular and immediate revelation. SECT. IV.

§ 7. And this concession doth not, as Mr. S. supposeth, make oral tradition to be finally the rule of faith; for the meaning of this question, ("What is "the rule of faith?") is, what is the next and immediate means whereby the knowledge of CHRIST's doctrine is conveyed to us? So that although oral tradition be the means whereby we come to know that these are the books of scripture, yet these books are the next and immediate means whereby we come to know what is CHRIST's doctrine, and consequently what we are to believe.

§ 8. Nor doth this concession make oral tradition to be the rule of faith, by a parity of reason; as if because we acknowledge that oral tradition alone can with competent certainty transmit a book to after-ages, we must therefore grant that it can with as much certainty convey a doctrine consisting of several articles of faith (nay, very many, as Mr. White acknowledges *) and many laws and precepts of life: so because oral tradition sufficiently assures us that this is *magna charta*, and that the statute-book, in which are contained those laws which it concerns every man to be skilful in; therefore, by like parity of reason, it must follow, that tradition itself is better than a book, even the best way imaginable to convey down such laws to us. Mr. S. saith * expressly it is; but how

* Rushw. dial. 4. sect. 9.

* P. 23.

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how truly, I appeal to experience, and the wisdom of our lawgivers, who seem to think otherwise. Tradition is already defined to us, "a delivery down "from hand to hand of the sense and faith of "forefathers," i. e. of the gospel or message of CHRIST. Now suppose any oral message, consisting of an hundred particularities, were to be delivered to an hundred several persons of different degrees of understanding and memory, by them to be conveyed to an hundred more, who were to convey it to others, and so onwards to a hundred descents; is it probable this message, with all the particularities of it, would be as truly conveyed through so many mouths, as if it were written down in so many letters, concerning which every bearer should need to say no more than this, that it was delivered to him as a letter written by him whose name was subscribed to it? I think it not probable, though the mens lives were concerned every one for the faithful delivery of his errand or letter. For the letter is a message which no man can mistake in, unless he will; but the errand so difficult and perplexed with its multitude of particulars, that it is an equal wager against every one of the messengers, that he either forgets, or mistakes something in it; it is ten thousand to one, that the first hundred do not all agree in it; it is a million to one, that the next succession do not all deliver it truly; for if any one of the hundred mistook or forgot any thing, it is then impossible that he that received it from him should deliver it right; and so the farther it goes, the greater change it is liable to. Yet after all this I do not say, but it may be demonstrated in Mr. S's way, to have more of certainty in it than the original letter.

§ 9. Thirdly,

§. 9. Thirdly, we allow, that the doctrine of christian religion hath in all ages been preached to the people by the pastors of the church, and taught by christian parents to their children; but with great difference, by some more plainly, and truly, and perfectly; by others with less care and exactness, according to the different degrees of ability and integrity in pastors or parents; and likewise with very different success, according to the different capacities and dispositions of the learners. We allow likewise, that there hath been a constant course of visible actions, conformable, in some measure, to the principles of christianity; but then we say, that those outward acts and circumstances of religion may have undergone great variations, and received great change, by the addition to them, and defalcation from them in several ages. That this not only is possible, but hath actually happened, I shall shew when I come to answer his demonstration. Now, that several of the main doctrines of faith contained in the scripture, and actions therein commanded, have been taught and practised by christians in all ages (as the articles summed up in the apostles creed, the use of the two sacraments) is a good evidence so far, that the scriptures contain the doctrine of christian religion. But then, if we consider how we come to know that such points of faith have been taught, and such external actions practised in all ages, it is not enough to say, there is a present multitude of christians that profess to have received such doctrines as ever believed and practised, and from hence to infer that they were so; the inconsequence of which argument I shall have a better occasion to

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shew afterwards: but he that will prove this to any man's satisfaction, must make it evident from the best monuments and records of several ages, that is, from the most authentick books of those times, that such doctrines have in all those ages been constantly and universally taught and practised. But then if from those records of former times it appear that other doctrines, not contained in scriptures, were not taught and practised universally in all ages, but have crept in by degrees, some in one age, and some in another, according as ignorance and superstition in the People, ambition and interest in the chief pastors of the church, have ministred occasion and opportunity; and that the innovators of these doctrines and practices, have all along pretended to confirm them out of scripture, as the acknowledg'd rule of faith; and have likewise acknowledged the books of scripture to have descended without any material corruption or alteration (all which will sufficiently appear in the process of my discourse) then cannot the oral and practical tradition of the present church, concerning any doctrine, as ever believed and practised, which hath no real foundation in scripture, be any argument against these books, as if they did not fully and clearly contain the christian doctrine. And to say the scripture is to be interpreted by oral and practical tradition, is no more reasonable than it would be to interpret the ancient books of the law, by the present practice of it; which every one, that compares things fairly together, must acknowledge to be full of deviations from the ancient law.

SECT.

SECT. V.

§. 1. 2*dly*, HOW much more he attributes to his rule of faith, than we think fit to attribute to ours.

How much Mr. S. attributes to his Rule of Faith, more than Protestants to theirs.

1. We do not say, that it is impossible, in the nature of the thing that this rule should fail, that is, either that these books should cease to descend, or should be corrupted. This we do not attribute to them, because there is no need we should. We believe the providence of GOD will take care of them, and secure them from being either lost or materially corrupted; yet we think it very possible that all the books in the world may be burn'd or otherwise destroyed. All that we affirm concerning our rule of faith, is, that it is abundantly sufficient (if men be not wanting to themselves) to convey the christian doctrine to all successive ages; and we think him very unreasonable that expects that GOD should do more than what is abundantly enough, for the perpetuating of christian religion in the world.

§. 2. Secondly, nor do we say that that certainty and assurance which we have, that these books are the same that were written by the apostles, is a first and self-evident principle: but only that it is a truth capable of evidence sufficient, and as much as we can have for a thing of that nature. Mr. S. may, if he please, say that tradition's certainty is a first and self-evident principle; but then he that says this, should take heed how he takes upon him to demonstrate it. Aristotle was so wise as never to

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demonſtrate firſt principles, for which he gives this very good reaſon, becauſe they cannot be demonſtrated. And moſt prudent men are of opinion, that a ſelf-evident principle, of all things in the world ſhould not be demonſtrated, becauſe it needs not: for to what purpoſe ſhould a man write a book to prove that which every man muſt aſſent to without any proof, ſo ſoon as it is propounded to him? I have always taken a ſelf-evident principle to be ſuch a propoſition, as having in it ſelf-ſufficient evidence of its own truth, and not needing to be made evident by any thing elſe. If I be herein miſtaken, I deſire Mr. S. to inform me better.

§ 3. So that the true ſtate of the controverſy between us, is, whether oral and practical tradition, in oppoſition to writing and books, be the only way and means whereby the doctrine of CHRIST can with certainty and ſecurity be conveyed down to us, who live at this diſtance from the age of CHRIST and his apoſtles: this he affirms, and the proteſtants deny, not only that it is the ſole means, but that it is ſufficient for the certain conveyance of this doctrine; and withal affirm, that this doctrine hath been conveyed down to us by the books of holy ſcripture, as the proper meaſure and ſtandard of our religion: but then they do not exclude oral tradition from being one means of conveying to us the certain knowledge of theſe books; nor do they exclude the authentick records of former ages, nor the conſtant teaching and practice of this doctrine, from being ſubordinate means and helps of conveying it from one age to another; nay, ſo far

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are they from excluding these concurrent means, SECT. V.
that they suppose them always to have been used, and to have been of great advantage for the propagating and explaining of this doctrine, so far as they have been truly subordinate to, and regulated by these sacred oracles, the holy scriptures, which, they say, do truly and fully contain that doctrine which CHRIST delivered to his apostles, and they preached to the world. To illustrate this by an instance: suppose there were a controversy now on foot, how men might come to know what was the true art of logick which Aristotle taught his scholars; and some should be of opinion, that the only way to know this would be by oral tradition from his scholars; which we might easily understand by consulting those of the present age, who learned it from those who received it from them, who at last had it from Aristotle himself: but others should think it the surest way to study his organon, a book acknowledged by all his scholars to have been written by himself, and to contain that doctrine which he taught them. They who take this latter course, suppose the authority of oral tradition for the conveying to them the knowledge of this book; and do suppose this doctrine to have been taught and practised in all ages, and a great many books to have been written by way of comment and explication of this doctrine; and that these have been good helps of promoting the knowledge of it. And they may well enough suppose all this, and yet be of opinion that the truest measure and standard of Aristotle's doctrine is his own book; and that it would

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would be a fond thing in any man, by forcing an interpretation upon his book, either contrary to, or very foreign and remote from the obvious ſenſe of his words, to go about to reconcile this book with that method of diſputing which is uſed by the profeſſed ariſtotelians of the preſent age, and with all that ſcholaſtick jargon which Mr. S. learned at Lisbon, and has made him ſo great a man in the ſcience of all controverſy, as even to enable him to demonſtrate firſt and ſelf-evident principles, a trick not to be learned out of Ariſtotle's organon. The application is ſo eaſy, that I need not make it.

THE

THE RULE of FAITH.

PART II.

Concerning the properties of the Rule of Faith; and whether they agree ſolely to oral tradition.

SECT. I.

§ 1. HAving thus endeavoured to bring the controverſy between us to its clear and true ſtate, that ſo we might not quarrel in the dark, and diſpute about we know not what; I come now to grapple more cloſely with his book. And the main foundations of his diſcourſe may be reduced to theſe three heads: SECT. I.

Firſt, that the eſſential properties of ſuch a way and means as can with certainty and ſecurity convey down to us the doctrine of CHRIST, belong ſolely to oral tradition. This he endeavours to prove in his five firſt diſcourſes.

Secondly, that it is impoſſible that this way of oral tradition ſhould fail. And this he pretends to prove in his four laſt diſcourſes.

Thirdly, that oral tradition hath been generally reputed by chriſtians in all ages, the ſole way and means of conveying down to them the doctrines of CHRIST.

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CHRIST. And this he attempts to ſhew in his laſt chapter, which he calls, "The conſent of authority "to the ſubſtance of his foregoing diſcourſes." If he make good theſe three things, he hath acquitted himſelf well in his undertaking; but whether he hath made them good or not, is now to be examined.

§ 2. Firſt, whether the eſſential properties of ſuch a way and means as can with certainty and ſecurity convey down to us the knowledge of CHRIST's doctrine, belong ſolely to oral tradition?

The true way to meaſure the eſſential properties of this or that means, is by conſidering its ſufficiency for its end: for whatſoever is neceſſary to make any means ſufficient for the obtaining of its end, is to be reputed an eſſential property of that means, and nothing elſe. Now, becauſe the end we are ſpeaking of is the conveyance of the knowledge of CHRIST's doctrine to all thoſe who are concerned to know it, in ſuch a manner as they may be ſufficiently certain and ſecure that it hath received no change or corruption from what it was when it was firſt delivered. From hence it appears, that the means to this end, muſt have theſe two properties: 1ſt, It muſt be ſufficiently plain and intelligible. 2dly, It muſt be ſufficiently certain to us, that is, ſuch as we may be fully ſatisfied concerning it, that it hath received no corruption or alteration. If it have theſe two conditions, it is ſufficient for its end; but if it want either of them, it muſt neceſſarily fall ſhort of its end: for if it be not plain and intelligible, it cannot convey this doctrine to our knowledge; if it be not certain, we

cannot

cannot be assur'd, that that doctrine which it brings down to us for the doctrine of CHRIST, is really such. SECT. I.

§ 3. I know he assigns more properties of this means, which he calls the Rule of Faith; but upon examination it will appear, that they either fall in with these two, or do not at all belong to it: as,

First, "That * it must be plain and self-evident "to all, as to its existence." Nothing can be more frivolous, than to make this a property of any thing; because whosoever enquires into the properties of a thing, is supposed to be already satisfied that the thing is. * P. 11.

Secondly, "That it be † evidenceable, as to its "ruling power;" that is, as he explains himself, "* that men be capable of knowing, that it de- "serves to be relied on as a rule." By which he must either understand the certainty of it: and then it falls in with the second property I mentioned, and is the same with the sixth which he lays down; or else he means more generally, that it is the property of a rule, that men be capable of knowing that it hath the properties of a rule: for I understand not how a man can know that any thing deserves to be relied on as a rule, otherwise than by knowing it hath the properties of a rule, that is, that it is sufficient for its end. But at this rate a man may multiply the properties of things without end, if the evidence of a thing, as to its existence, be one property; and then, that we be capable of knowing that it is such a thing, be another. † P. 11. * P. 3.

PART II.

§ 4. Thirdly, "that it be * apt to settle and "justify undoubting persons." What he means here by settling undoubting persons, I am not able, on a sudden, to comprehend, because I understand not what unsettles a man besides doubting; for if a man be but so well satisfied about any thing as to have no doubt concerning it, I do not easily apprehend how he can be settled better, that is, how his mind can be more at rest than not to doubt. But if by undoubting persons he means those who do not doubt for the present, but afterwards may doubt, then I perceive what he means by apt to settle undoubting persons, viz. apt to settle persons when they do doubt, that is, when they are not undoubting persons. As for justifying undoubting persons, if he means that whosoever securely relies on this rule ought of right to be acquitted, as acting rationally in so doing; this is plainly consequent upon the two properties I have laid down: for if the means of conveying CHRIST's doctrine be sufficiently plain and certain, every man that relies upon it is justified in so doing, because he trusts a means which is sufficient for its end.

* P. 12.

* P. 12. § 5. Fourthly, "that * it be apt to satisfy fully "the most sceptical dissenters and rational doubters." For its aptitude to satisfy rational doubters, that plainly follows from the sufficient certainty of it; but why it should be a necessary property of a rule of faith, to be apt to satisfy the most sceptical dissenter, I can no more divine, than I can, why he should call a dissenter sceptical, which are repugnant terms: for a sceptick is one who neither assents to any thing, nor dissents; but is in a perpetual suspense,

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ſuſpenſe, becauſe he looks upon every opinion, as balanced by a contrary opinion of equal probability, without any inclination of the ſcales either way. But if by the moſt ſceptical diſſenter he means only a ſceptick, one that doth not believe the doctrine of CHRIST, nor any thing elſe; then I would fain know what that is which in reaſon is apt fully to ſatisfy ſuch a perſon. If any thing will, ſure a demonſtration will; but there is no aptitude at all in a demonſtration, to ſatisfy him who doubts whether there be any ſuch thing as a demonſtration, and likewiſe queſtions the certainty of all thoſe principles from whence any concluſion can be demonſtrated. And thoſe who are moſt ſceptical, profeſs to doubt of all this.

§. 6. Fifthly, "That it * be apt to convince "the moſt obſtinate and acute adverſary." If the rule be plain and certain, the moſt acute adverſary may be convinced by it if he will, that is, if he be not obſtinate; but if he be obſtinate, that is, ſuch a one as will not be convinced, but will perſiſt in his error in deſpite of all evidence that can be offered him, then I muſt profeſs that I do not know any kind of evidence that is apt to convince that man who will not be convinced by any reaſon that can be propounded to him. And that he ought not to have expected this from any rule of faith, though never ſo ſelf-evident, he might have learned from the ſame author, in whom he may find his chief properties of the rule of faith, if he had but had the patience to have conſider'd his explication of them; I mean Dr. Holden *, who lays down the ſecond property of the rule of faith (or, as he calls it, "the means

*P. 11, 12.

*Analyſ. fid. l. 1. c. 3.

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" whereby we come to the knowledge of revealed " truth") in theſe words, " another (viz. condition " of this means, &c.) is, that it be apt of its own " nature to afford the greateſt true and rational " certainty, to all men without exception, to whom " the knowledge of it ſhall come; provided they " be furniſhed with the faculty of reaſon, and " have their minds purified from all paſſion and " luſt, which do (as he tells us, cap. 6.) often hin- " der the moſt ſagacious perſons from underſtanding " the moſt evident and manifeſt truth. Now I " ſuppoſe obſtinacy to be the effect of paſſion and " luſt."

If Mr. S. mean, that the rule of faith muſt be apt to conquer obſtinacy, and make men lay it aſide, I cannot underſtand this neither; unleſs he mean that the rule of faith muſt be a cudgel, which the traditionary church have been good at, and may uſe it again when occaſion ſerves; for none but they have a title to it upon a church account, as Mr. S. tells us, corol. 10. But ſetting aſide this, I do not know any thing elſe that is apt to conquer obſtinacy: not the cleareſt reaſon, or the ſtrongeſt demonſtration, for that I am ſure is no ways fitted to combat a wilful and unreaſonable humour with any probability of ſucceſs. And if any one doubt of this, if he will but make trial, he may eaſily be convinced by experience how unapt obſtinate perſons are to be convinced by reaſon. I do not know any thing that ever carried greater evidence than the doctrine of CHRIST, preached by himſelf and his apoſtles to the obſtinate Jews, and confirmed by multitudes of unqueſtionable miracles; and yet we do not find by

by the ſucceſs of it, that it was ſo very apt to convince thoſe that were obſtinate. And no man can judge of the aptitude of a means to an end, otherwiſe than by the uſual and frequent ſucceſs of it when it is applied. Nor do I think that the doctrine of the goſpel was ever intended for that purpoſe. GOD hath provided no remedy for the wilful and perverſe, but he hath done that which is ſufficient for the ſatisfying and winning over of thoſe who are teachable and willing to learn: and ſuch a diſpoſition ſuppoſeth a man to have laid aſide both ſcepticiſm and obſtinacy. SECT. I.

§. 7. Sixthly, "that * it be certain in itſelf." * P. 12.

Seventhly, "that † it be abſolutely aſcertainable "to us." † P. 12.

Theſe two are comprehended in the ſecond property I laid down; ſo that I have nothing to ſay againſt them, but that the laſt looks very like a contradiction, "abſolutely aſcertainable to us;" which is to ſay, "with reſpect to us, without re-"ſpect to us;" for abſolutely ſeems to exclude reſpect, and to us implies it.

Having thus ſhewn, that the ſeven properties he mentions, are either coincident with theſe two I have laid down, or conſequent upon them, or abſurd and impertinent; it remains, that the true properties of a rule of faith are thoſe two which I firſt named, and no more.

SECT.

SECT. II.

That the properties of a rule of faith belong to ſcripture.

§. 1. LET us now ſee how he endeavours to ſhew, that theſe properties agree ſolely to oral tradition: he tells us "there are but two preten-"ders to this title of being the rule of faith, ſcrip-"ture and oral tradition; theſe properties do not be-"long to ſcripture, and they do to oral tradition, "therefore ſolely to it." A very good argument, if he can prove theſe two things, "that theſe two pro-"perties do not belong to ſcripture, and that they "do to oral tradition."

§. 2. In order to the proving of the firſt, that theſe properties do not belong to ſcripture, he pre-
* P. 13. miſeth this note, "* that we cannot by the ſcrip-"tures mean the ſenſe of them, but the book, that "is, ſuch or ſuch characters not yet ſenſed or inter-"preted." But why can we not, by the ſcriptures, mean the ſenſe of them? He gives this clear and admirable reaſon, becauſe the ſenſe of the ſcripture, is, "the things to be known, and theſe we confeſs "are the very points of faith, of which the "rule of faith is to aſcertain us." Which is juſt as if a man ſhould reaſon thus: thoſe who ſay the ſtatute-book can convey to them the knowledge of the ſtatute-law, cannot by the ſtatute-book mean the ſenſe of it, but the book; that is, ſuch or ſuch characters not yet ſenſed or interpreted; becauſe the ſenſe of the ſtatute-book is the thing to be known; and theſe are the very laws, the knowledge whereof is to be conveyed to them by this book: which is to ſay, that a book cannot convey to a man the know-

knowledge of any matter, becauſe if it did, it would convey to him the thing to be known. But that he may farther ſee what excellent reaſoning this is, I ſhall apply this paragraph to oral tradition, for the argument holds every whit as well concerning that: "To ſpeak to them in their own language, who "ſay that oral tradition is their rule, we muſt pre- "miſe this note, that they cannot mean by oral tra- "dition the ſenſe of it, that is, the things to be "known; for thoſe, they confeſs, are the very "points of faith, of which the rule of faith is to "aſcertain us: when they ſay then, that oral tra- "dition is the rule of faith, they can only mean "by oral tradition the words wherein it is deli- "vered, not yet ſenſed or interpreted, but as yet to "be ſenſed; that is, ſuch or ſuch ſounds, with their "aptneſs to ſignify to them aſſuredly GOD's mind, "or aſcertain them of their faith; for abſtracting "from the ſenſe and actual ſignification of thoſe words, "there is nothing imaginable left but thoſe ſounds, "with their aptneſs to ſignify it:" when he hath anſwered this argument, he will have anſwered his own. In the mean while, this diſcourſe, that he who holds the ſcripture to be the rule of faith, muſt needs by the ſcriptures mean a book void of ſenſe, &c. becauſe otherwiſe if by ſcripture he ſhould underſtand a book, that hath a certain ſenſe in it, that ſenſe muſt be the doctrine of CHRIST, which is the very thing that this book is to convey to us; I ſay, this diſcourſe tends only to prove it an abſurd thing for any man, that holds ſcripture the means of conveying CHRIST's doctrine, to underſtand by the ſcripture a book that conveys

SECT. II.

CHRIST's

PART I. CHRIST's doctrine. This being his own reason, put into plain English, I leave the reader to judge whether it be not something short of perfect science and demonstration. Nay, if it were throughly examined, I doubt whether it would not fall short of that low pitch of science which he speaks of in his preface, where he tells us, "that the way of "science is to proceed from one piece of sense to "another."

§ 3. Having premised this, that by the scriptures we must mean only dead characters, that have no sense under them, he proceeds to shew that these dead characters have not the properties of a rule of faith belonging to them. Which although it be nothing to the purpose when he hath shewn it, yet it is very pleasant to observe by what cross and untoward arguments he goes about it: of which I will give the reader a taste by one or two instances.

In the first place he shews that it cannot be evident to us, "that these books were written by men * P. 14. "divinely inspired, because * till the seeming contra- "dictions in those books are solved, which to do, is "one of the most difficult tasks in the world, they "cannot be concluded to be of GOD's inditing." Now how is this an argument against those, who by the scriptures must mean unsensed letters and characters? I had always thought contradictions had been in the sense of words, not in the letters and characters; but I perceive he hath a peculiar opinion, that the four and twenty letters do contradict one another.

* P. 17. The other instance shall be in his last argument *, which is this, "that the scripture cannot be the rule of

" of faith, becauſe thoſe who are to be ruled and SECT. II.
" guided by the ſcripture's letter to faith, cannot be
" certain of the true ſenſe of it :" which is to ſay, that unſenſed letters and characters cannot be the rule of faith, becauſe the rule of faith muſt have a certain ſenſe, that is, muſt not be unſenſed letters and characters; which in plain engliſh amounts to thus much, unſenſed letters and characters cannot be the rule of faith, that they cannot.

§ 4. And thus I might trace him through all his properties of the rule of faith, and let the reader ſee how incomparably he demonſtrates the falſhood of this proteſtant tenet (as he calls it) that a ſenſeleſs book may be a rule of faith. But I am weary of purſuing him in theſe airy and phantaſtical combats, and ſhall leave him to fight with his own fancies, and batter down the caſtles which himſelf hath built. Only I think fit to acquaint him, once for all, with a great ſecret of the proteſtant doctrine, which it ſeems he hath hitherto been ignorant of (for I am ſtill more confirmed in my opinion, that he forſook our religion before he underſtood it) that when they ſay the ſcriptures are the rule of faith, or the means whereby CHRIST's doctrine is conveyed down to them, they mean by the ſcriptures books written in ſuch words as do ſufficiently expreſs the ſenſe and meaning of CHRIST's doctrine.

§ 5. And to ſatisfy him that we are not abſurd and unreaſonable in ſuppoſing the ſcriptures to be ſuch a book, I would beg the favour of him to grant me theſe four things, or ſhew reaſon to the contrary.

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First, that whatever can be ſpoken in plain and intelligible words, and ſuch as have a certain ſenſe, may be written in the ſame words.

Secondly, that the ſame words are as intelligible when they are written as when they are ſpoken.

Thirdly, That GOD, if he pleaſe, can indite a book in as plain words as any of his creatures.

Fourthly, that we have no reaſon to think that GOD affects obſcurity, and envies that men ſhould underſtand him in thoſe things which are neceſſary for them to know, and which muſt have been written to no purpoſe if we cannot underſtand them. St Luke * tells Theophilus, that he wrote the hiſtory of CHRIST to him, on purpoſe to give him a certain knowledge of thoſe things which he writ. But how a book which hath no certain ſenſe, ſhould give a man certain knowledge of things, is beyond my capacity. St. John * ſaith, that he purpoſely committed ſeveral of CHRIST's miracles to writing, that men might believe on him. But now, had Mr. S. been at his elbow, he would have adviſed him to ſpare his labour, and would have given him this good reaſon for it; becauſe when he had written his book, no body would be able to find the certain ſenſe of it without oral tradition, and that alone would ſecurely and intelligibly convey both the doctrine of CHRIST, and the certain knowledge of thoſe miracles which he wrought for the confirmation of it. If theſe four things be but granted, I ſee not why, when we ſay that the ſcriptures are the means of conveying to us CHRIST's doctrine, we may not be allowed to underſtand by the ſcriptures, a book which doth

* Luke i. 3, 4.

* John xx. 31.

doth in plain and intelligible words expreſs to us this doctrine. SECT. III.

SECT. III.

§ 1. AND now, although this might have been a ſufficient anſwer to his exceptions againſt the ſcriptures, as being incapable of the properties of a rule of faith; becauſe all of them ſuppoſe that which is apparently falſe and abſurd, as granted by proteſtants, viz. that the ſcriptures are only a heap of dead letters and inſignificant characters, without any ſenſe under them; and that oral tradition is that only which gives them life and ſenſe: yet, becauſe ſeveral of his exceptions pretend to ſhew, that the true properties of a rule of faith do not at all appertain to the ſcriptures; therefore I ſhall give particular anſwers to them, and, as I go along, ſhew that tradition is liable to all or moſt of thoſe exceptions, and to far greater than thoſe. Mr. S's exceptions againſt ſcripture examined.

§ 2. Whereas he ſays, "* it cannot be evident "to proteſtants, from their principles, that the books "of ſcripture were originally written by men divine-"ly inſpired:" I will ſhew him that it may, and then anſwer the reaſons of this exception. * P. 13.

It is evident from an univerſal, conſtant, and uncontrolled tradition among chriſtians, not only oral, but written, and from the acknowledgment of the greateſt adverſaries of our religion, that theſe books were originally written by the apoſtles and evangeliſts. And this is not only a proteſtant principle, but the principle of all mankind, "That an undoubted "tradition is ſufficient evidence of the antiquity and

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"author of a book," and all the extrinsecal arguments that can ordinarily be had of a book written long ago.

Next, it is evident that the apostles were men divinely inspired, that is, secured from error and mistake in the writing of this doctrine, from the miracles that were wrought for the confirmation of it; because it is unreasonable to imagine, that the divine power should so remarkably interpose for the confirmation of a doctrine, and give so eminent an attestation to the apostles to convince the world that they were immediately appointed and commissioned by GOD, and yet not secure them from error in the delivery of it. And that such miracles were wrought, is evident from as credible histories as we have for any of those things which we do most firmly believe. And this is better evidence that the apostles were men divinely inspired, than bare oral tradition can furnish us withal: for setting aside the authentick relation of these matters in books, it is most probable, that oral tradition of itself, and without books, would scarce have preserved the memory of any of those particular miracles of our saviour and his apostles which are recorded in scripture. And for the probability of this, I offer these two things to his consideration.

First, no man can deny that memorable persons have lived, and actions been done in the world innumerable, whereof no history now extant makes any mention.

Secondly, he himself will grant, that our saviour wrought innumerable more miracles than are recorded in scripture. And now I challenge him to shew the single virtue of oral tradition, by giving an account of

of any of those persons, or their actions, who lived 1500 or 2000 years ago, besides those which are mentioned in books; or to give a catalogue but of ten of those innumerable miracles wrought by our saviour; which are not recorded by the evangelists, with circumstances as punctual and particular as those are clothed withal: if he can do this, it will be a good evidence that oral tradition singly, and by itself, can do something; but if he cannot, 'tis as plain an evidence on the contrary, that if those actions of former times, and those miracles of our SAVIOUR and his apostles which are recorded in books, had never been written, but intrusted solely to oral tradition, we should have heard as little of it at this day, as we do of those that were not written. SECT. III.

§ 3. Now to examine his reasons for this exception:

First, he saith, "* 'tis most manifest that this "cannot be made evident to the vulgar, that scrip- "ture was written by men divinely inspired." This reason is as easily answered, by saying it is most manifest that it can: but besides saying so, I have shewed how it may be made as evident to the vulgar, as other things which they do most firmly, and upon good grounds, believe. Even the rudest of the vulgar, and those who cannot read, do believe upon very good grounds that there was such a king as William the conqueror; and the miracles of CHRIST and his apostles are capable of as good evidence as we have for this. * P. 13.

Secondly, he says, "* this cannot be evident to "the curious and most speculative searchers, but by "so deep an inspection into the sense of scripture, as "shall discover such secrets, that philosophy and hu- "mane industry could never have arrived to." As if * P. 13, 14.

we

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we could not be assured that any thing were written by men divinely inspired, unless it were above the reach of humane understanding; and as if no man could know that this was our SAVIOUR's doctrine, "Whatever ye would that men should do unto you, that "do ye likewise unto them," because every one can understand it. But if there were more mysteries in the scriptures than there are, I hope a man might be satisfied that they were written by men divinely inspired, without a clear comprehension of all those mysteries. The evidence of the inspiration of any person doth not depend upon the plainness or sublimity of the things revealed to him, but upon the goodness of the arguments which tend to persuade us that the person is so inspired; and the argument that is most fit to satisfy us of that, is, if he work miracles. Now I would gladly know why a learned man cannot be assured of a miracle, that is, a plain sensible matter of fact done long ago, but "by so deep "an inspection into the sense of scripture, as shall dis-"cover such secrets that philosophy and humane in-"dustry could never have arrived to."

* P. 14. § 4. Thirdly, because "* all the seeming contra-"dictions of scripture must be solved, before we can "out of the bare letter conclude the scripture to be "of GOD's inditing; to solve which literally, plain-"ly, and satisfactorily (he tells us) the memory of so "many particulars, which made them clearer to those "of the age in which they were written, and the "matter known, must needs be so worn out by "tract of time, that it is one of the most diffi-"cult tasks in the world." As if we could not believe a book to be of GOD's inditing, because there seem

seem now to be some contradictions in it, which we have reason to believe could easily have been solved by those who liv'd in the age in which it was written. Or as if oral tradition could help a man to solve these contradictions, when the memory of particulars necessary for the clear solution of them is (as himself confesses) worn out by tract of time. If Mr. S. can, in order to the solution of the seeming contradictions of scripture, demonstrate, that oral tradition hath to this day preserved the memory of those particulars (necessary for that purpose) the memory of which must needs be long since worn out by tract of time, then I will readily yield, that his rule of faith hath in this particular the advantage of ours. But if he cannot do this, why doth he make that an argument against our rule, which is as strong against his own? This is just like captain Everard's friend's way of arguing against the protestants, that they cannot rely upon scripture, because it is full of plain contradictions impossible to be reconciled; and therefore they ought in all reason to submit to the infallibility of the church. And for an instance of such a contradiction, he pitched upon the three fourteen generations mentioned in the first of St. Matthew, because the third series of generations, if they be counted, will be found to be but thirteen. Not to mention now, how this difficulty hath been sufficiently satisfied both by protestant and popish commentators, without any recourse to oral tradition; that which I take notice of, is the unreasonableness of making this an exception against the protestants, when it comes with every whit as much force upon themselves. Suppose this contradiction not capable of any solution by protestants (as he affirms) and I should sub-

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mit

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mit to the infallibility of the church; can he assure me, that infallibility can make thirteen, fourteen? If it cannot, how am I nearer satisfaction in this point, by acknowledging the infallibility of the church? the case is the very same, as to Mr. S's exception, if I owned oral tradition, I should be never the nearer solving the seeming contradictions of scripture, and consequently I could not in reason conclude it to be of GOD's inditing. So that in truth, these exceptions, if they were true, would not strike at protestancy, but at christian religion; which is the general unhappiness of most of the popish arguments; than which there is no greater evidence, that the church of Rome is not the true mother, because she had rather christianity should be destroyed, than it should appear that any other church hath a claim to it. It is a work very proper for the heretick Marcion, to assault religion this way; who, as Tertullian * tells us, writ a whole book, which he called Antitheses, wherein he reckoned up all the contradictions (as he thought) between the old and new testament: but methinks it is very improper for the papists, who pretend to be the only true christians in the world, to strain their wits to discover as many contradictions as they can in the scripture, and to prove that there is no way of reconciling them; the natural consequence of which is, the exposing of this sacred instrument of our religion, and even christianity itself to the scorn of atheists. Therefore, to be very plain with Mr. S. and captain Everard, I am heartily sorry to see, that one of the chief fruits of their conversion is to abuse the bible.

* L. 1. contr. Marcion.

§ 5. Second-

§ 5. Secondly, he says, " * that protestants can- SECT. III.
" not know how many the books of scripture
" ought to be, and which of the many controverted
" ones may be securely put in that catalogue,
" which not." This he proves, by saying, " 'tis
" most palpable, that few, or at least the rude vul-
" gar, can never be assured of it." And if this be a good argument, this again is a good answer, to say it is not most palpable. But I shall deal more liberally, and tell him, that we know that just so many ought to be received as uncontroverted books, concerning which, it cannot be shewn there was ever any controversy; and so many as controverted, concerning which it appears that question hath been made: and if those which have been controverted have been since received by those churches which once doubted of them, there is now no farther doubt concerning them, because the controversy about them is at an end. And now I would fain know, what greater certainty oral tradition can give us of the true catalogue of the books of scripture: for it must either acknowledge some books have been controverted, or not; if not, why doth he make a supposition of controverted books? If oral tradition acknowledge some to have been controverted, then it cannot assure us that they have not been controverted, nor consequently that they ought to be received as never having been controverted; but only as such, concerning which those churches who did once raise a controversy about them, have been since satisfied that they are canonical. The traditionary church now receives the epistle to the Hebrews as canonical. I ask, do they receive it as ever delivered for such? that

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they must, if they receive it from oral tradition, which conveys things to them under this notion, as ever delivered; and yet St. Hierom speaking (not as a speculator, but a testifier) saith expressly of it *, "that "the custom of the Latin church doth not receive it "among the canonical scriptures." What saith Mr. S. to this? It is clear from this testimony, that the Roman church, in St. Hierom's time, did not acknowledge this epistle for canonical; and 'tis as plain, that the present Roman church doth receive it for canonical. Where is then the infallibility of oral tradition? How does the living voice of the present church assure us, that what books are now received by her were ever received by her? And if it cannot do this, but the matter must come to be tried by the best records of former ages (which the protestants are willing to have their catalogue tried by) then it seems the protestants have a better way to know what books are canonical, than is the infallible way of oral tradition; and so long as 'tis better, no matter tho' it be not called infallible.

* Com. in Esai. c. 6. & c. 8.

* P. 15.

§ 6. Thirdly, he says, "* the Protestants cannot "know, that the very original, or a perfectly true "copy of these books hath been preserved." It is not necessary that they should know either of these, it is sufficient that they know, that those copies which they have, are not materially corrupted in any matter of faith or practice; and that they have sufficient assurance of this, I have already shewn. And how doth he prove the contrary? By his usual argument, with saying, "it is manifest-"ly impossible." But how do the church of Rome know that they have perfectly true copies of the scriptures in the original languages? they do not pre-

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tend to know this, the learned men of that church acknowledge the various readings as well as we, and do not pretend to know otherwiſe than by probable conjecture (as we alſo may do) which of thoſe readings is the true one. And why ſhould it be more neceſſary for us to know this, than for them? If they think it reaſonable to content themſelves with knowing, that no material corruptions have crept into thoſe books, ſo may we. And that there have not, we know by better arguments than oral tradition, even by the aſſurance we have of GOD's vigilant providence, and from a moral impoſſibility in the thing, that a book ſo univerſally diſperſed, and tranſlated into ſo many languages, and conſtantly read in the aſſemblies of chriſtians, ſhould have been materially corrupted, ſo as that all thoſe copies and tranſlations ſhould have agreed in thoſe corruptions. And this reaſon St. Auſtin * gives of the preſervation of the ſcriptures entire rather than any other book; if Mr. S. likes it not, he may call St. Auſtin to account for it.

* Ep. 48.

§ 7. Fourthly, he ſays, "the proteſtants, at leaſt the rudeſt vulgar, can have no aſſurance that thoſe books are rightly tranſlated, becauſe they cannot be aſſured either of the ability or integrity of tranſlators."

* P. 15.

Fifthly, "Nor can they (ſays * he) be aſſured, that the tranſcribers, and printers, and correctors of the preſs have carefully and faithfully done their part, in tranſcribing and printing the ſeveral copies and tranſlations of ſcripture aright; becauſe they only can have evidence of the right letter of ſcripture, who ſtood at their elbows attentively watching they ſhould not err in making it perfectly like a former copy; and even then, why might they not miſtruſt their own eyes and aptneſs to overſee?" I

* P. 16, 17.

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put these two exceptions together, because the same answer will serve them both. The grounds of these exceptions, if they have any, are these: that no man is to be trusted, either for his skill or honesty; and, that it is dangerous for men to trust their own eyes. Unless both these be true, these exceptions are of no force: for if we can be assured that other men have sufficient skill in any thing which we ourselves do not sufficiently understand, we may be assured that those who translated the bible had skill in the original languages; because very credible persons tell us so, and we have no reason to doubt their testimony in this particular, more than in any other matter. So that if we can have sufficient assurance of mens integrity in any thing, we have no reason to doubt of the skill of translators, transcribers, or printers; and if we can have no assurance of mens integrity in any thing, then no man can be assured there was such a man as Henry the eighth; and yet I hope the church of Rome makes no doubt of it: nor can any man be assured there is such a city as Rome, who hath not seen it; nay, if he have, "* why may he not mistrust his own "eyes?" And, which is the saddest inconvenience of all, if no body be to be trusted, nor mens own eyes, (and for the same reason, sure not their ears) what becomes of the infallibility of oral and practical tradition? which necessarily supposeth a competent understanding, a faithful memory, an honest mind, in the generality of those who delivered CHRIST's doctrine down to us: and by what means soever a man can be assured of these, by the same he may much more easily be assured of the ability and integrity of translators, transcribers, and printers. But above all, it supposeth that mens ears and eyes cannot

* P. 16.

deceive

deceive them in thoſe things which they are taught and ſee practiſed. SECT. III.

Is it not very pretty to ſee what pitiful ſhifts men that ſerve an hypotheſis are put to? when, to maintain infallibility, they are forced to run to the extremities of ſcepticiſm; and to defend the certainty of oral tradition, (which depends upon the certainty of mens ſenſes, and an aſſurance of the ability and integrity of thoſe who were dead fifteen hundred years before we were born) are glad to take refuge in principles quite contrary; ſuch as theſe, that we can have no aſſurance, but that whole profeſſions of men "* might hap to be knaves," * P. 16. that we can have no ſufficient evidence that any man made his copy perfectly like the former, unleſs "* we ſtood at his elbow, attentively watching him:" * P. 16. nay, and if we did ſo, we have ſtill reaſon to diſtruſt our ſenſes. In ſhort, all humane faith ſuppoſeth honeſty among men; and that for matters of fact and plain objects of ſenſe, the general and uncontrolled teſtimony of mankind is to be credited; and for matters of peculiar skill and knowledge, that the generality of thoſe who are accounted skilful in that kind, are to be relied upon: for, as Ariſtotle well obſerves, there is no greater ſign of an undiſciplined wit (or, to uſe one of Mr. S's fine phraſes, * "of a man not acquainted with the "paths of ſcience") than to expect greater evidence for things than they are capable of. Every man hath reaſon to be aſſured of a thing which is capable of ſufficient evidence, when he hath as much evidence for it as the nature of that thing will bear, and as the capacity he is in will permit him to * Preface.

have.

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have. And, as Mr. White says well, "* satisfaction is "to be given to every one according to his capa- "city; it is sufficient for a child to believe his "parents; for a clown to believe his preacher." And this is universally true in all cases, where we have not better or equal evidence to the contrary. But such is the unhappiness of the popish doctrines, that if people were permitted the free use of the scripture, they would easily discern them to have no probable foundation in it, and to be plainly contrary to it; so that it cannot be safe for their preachers to tell the people that the scripture is the only rule of faith, lest they should find cause not to believe them, when they teach doctrines so plainly contrary to that rule.

* Answ. to the lord Falkland, P. 33.

* P. 17. § 8. Lastly, he says, "* the protestants cannot be certain of the true sense of scripture." Does he mean of plain texts, or obscure ones? Of the true sense of plain texts I hope every one may be certain; and for obscure ones, it is not necessary every one should. But it may be there are no plain texts in the scriptures: then the reason of it must be (till Mr. S. can shew a better) either because it is impossible for any one to write plainly; or because God cannot write so plainly as men; or because we have good reason to think that he would not write things necessary for every one to believe, so as men might clearly understand him.

* P. 17. But he tells us, "* the numerous comments upon "scripture are an evidence that no man can be "certain of the true sense of it." I hope not; for if those numerous commentators do generally agree in the sense of plain texts (as 'tis certain they do)

do) then this argument signifies nothing as to such texts; and as for those which are obscure, let commentators differ about them as much as they please, so long as all necessary points of faith and matters of practice are delivered in plain texts. He adds, "* There are infinite disputes about the sense of "scripture, even in most concerning points, as "in that of CHRIST's divinity." But are not commentators, both protestant and popish, generally agreed about the sense of scripture in that point? And what if some out of prejudice mistake, or out of perverseness do wrest the plainest texts of scripture for the divinity of CHRIST, to another sense? is this any argument that those texts are not sufficiently plain? can any thing be spoken or written in words so clear from ambiguity, which a perverse or prejudiced mind shall not be able to vex and force to another meaning? GOD did not write the scriptures for the froward and the captious, but for those who will read them with a free and unprejudiced mind, and are willing to come to the knowledge of the truth. If Mr. S. had been conversant in the writings of the fathers, he could not but have taken notice with what confidence they attempted to prove the divinity of CHRIST out of scripture, as if that did afford convincing arguments for this purpose. St. Chrysostom * professes to demonstrate out of scripture, "that the SON is of the same "substance with the FATHER;" and relies upon scripture alone for this, without mentioning any other kind of argument: so that it seems St. Chrysostom was not acquainted with the insufficiency of scripture for the conviction of hereticks in this point;

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* P. 17.

* Hom. 32 de consubstant.

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point; and that he was either ignorant of the (infallible) way of demonstrating this point from oral tradition, or had no great opinion of it. The same father elsewhere * arguing against hereticks about the divinity of CHRIST, says, "that they pervert the scripture, to strengthen their heresy from thence." But then he does not (with Mr. S.) blame the scripture, and say that this doctrine is not there delivered with sufficient clearness; but contrariwise he says, "that "the scripture is clear enough, but the corrupt minds "of hereticks will not see what is there contained." Had St. Chrysostom been a true son of the traditionary church, he would have laid hold of this occasion to vilify the scriptures, and to shew the necessity of regulating our faith not by such uncertain records, but by the infallible reports of oral tradition.

* Hom. 7. de sancto Phoca.

§ 9. But because Mr. S. lays great weight (in several parts of his book) upon this exception against Scripture, viz. "that protestants cannot be certain "of the true sense of it;" therefore I shall not content my self, only to have shewn that we may be sufficiently certain of the sense of scripture, so far as to understand all necessary matters of faith and practice, and that more than this is not necessary; but shall likewise return this exception upon him, by enquiring into these two things;

1. How the traditionary church can be more certain of the true sense of scripture than the protestants?

2. How they can be more certain of the true sense of tradition, than protestants of the true sense of scripture?

1. How

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1. How the traditionary church can be more certain of the true ſenſe of ſcripture than proteſtants? they pretend to have an oral tradition of the true ſenſe of it, delivered down from father to ſon. But this only reacheth to thoſe texts, which are coincident with the main body of chriſtian doctrine; as for all other parts of ſcripture, they are as uſeleſs to papiſts, as they ſuppoſe they are to us; becauſe wanting the help of oral tradition, they cannot be certain of one tittle of them. And as for thoſe texts, the ſenſe whereof is conveyed down by oral tradition; this ſenſe is, I hope, delivered in ſome words or other: and have all preachers, and fathers, and mothers, and nurſes, the faculty of delivering this ſenſe in words ſo plain as cannot poſſibly be miſtaken or wreſted to another ſenſe? I am ſorry that when every one hath this faculty of ſpeaking their thoughts plainly, the HOLY GHOST ſhould be repreſented as not able to convey his mind to men in intelligible words. And does not his own objection rebound upon himſelf? if the church have a certain ſenſe of ſcripture orally delivered, whence are the numerous comments of the fathers upon it, and of later writers of their church, and the infinite diſputes about the ſenſe of it, in the moſt concerning points? viz. "The efficacy of GOD's grace, "the ſupremacy of St. Peter, the infallibility of a "pope and council by immediate aſſiſtance of the "HOLY GHOST!" what a ſtir is made about the ſenſe of *dabo tibi claves*, *tu es Petrus*, *& ſuper hanc petram*, *&c. paſce oves?* Do not they differ about the meaning of theſe texts among themſelves, as much as they do from the fathers, and from the proteſtants?

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ſtants? ſome underſtanding them of St. Peter's ſupremacy only, others of his infallibility, others of his infallibility only in and with a general council; which yet others do not allow to pope or council from any immediate aſſiſtance, but only from the rational force of tradition, ſuppoſing that the pope and council hold to it. If oral tradition have brought down a certain ſenſe of theſe texts, why do they not produce it, and agree in it? if it have not (to uſe a hot phraſe of his own *) "'tis perfect phrenzy to ſay they can be certain of the true ſenſe of "ſcripture."

* P. 17.

If he ſay, they are by tradition made certain of the true ſenſe of ſcripture, ſo far as it concerns the main body of chriſtian doctrine, and do all agree in it, and that is ſufficient; then I ask him, what are thoſe points of faith which make up the body of chriſtian doctrine? He will tell me, they are thoſe which all catholicks agree to have deſcended to them from the apoſtles by a conſtant and uninterrupted tradition. I enquire farther, how I ſhall know what is the certain ſenſe of ſcripture ſo far as it concerns theſe points? He muſt anſwer as before, that that is the true ſenſe which all catholicks agree to have deſcended to them by tradition. Which amounts to this, that all catholicks do agree in the ſenſe of ſcripture ſo far as they do all agree in it. It is to be hoped, that the proteſtants (how much ſoever at preſent they differ about the ſenſe of ſcripture) may in time come to as good an agreement as this. This brings to my remembrance a paſſage or two of Mr. Creſſy; the one in his appendix *, where he tells us, "That as it is "impoſ-

* Exomolog. 2d. edit. p. 554.

" impoſſible that hereticks ſhould agree in any other " way than in faction; ſo it is impoſſible that catho- " licks ſhould differ in points of faith." Why ſo? were not thoſe catholicks firſt, who afterwards became hereticks? and when they became ſo, did they not differ in points of belief? yes, but here lies the conceit, when they began to differ, then they ceaſed to be catholicks; therefore catholicks can never differ in points of faith. The other paſſage is, where he ſays *, " that he hath for- " ſaken a church where unity was impoſſible, &c. " and betaken himſelf to a church where ſchiſm is " impoſſible." This laſt clauſe, " that ſchiſm is " impoſſible in their church," cannot poſſibly be true but in the ſame abſurd and ludicrous ſenſe, in which it is impoſſible for catholicks to differ in points of belief. For he cannot deny but that it is poſſible for men to break off from the communion of their church, which in his ſenſe is ſchiſm. But here is the ſubtilty of it, no ſchiſmatick is of their church, becauſe ſo ſoon as he is a ſchiſmatick he is out of it; therefore ſchiſm is impoſſible in their church. And is it not as impoſſible in the church of England? Where Mr. Cr. might have done well to have continued, till he could have given a wiſer reaſon of forſaking her.

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* Exomolog. c. 53. ſect. 2.

§ 10. But to return to our purpoſe. Mr. Ruſhworth * acknowledgeth, that the ſcripture is of itſelf ſufficiently plain as to matters of practice; for he asks, " Who is ſo blind as not to ſee that theſe " things are to be found in ſcripture by a ſenſible, " common, and diſcreet reading of it; though per- " haps by a rigorous and exact balancing of every

* Dial. 2. ſect. 12.

PART II. " particular word and ſyllable, any of theſe things " would vaniſh away we know not how?" So that for the direction of our lives and actions, he confeſſeth the ſcripture to be ſufficiently plain, if men will but read it ſenſibly and diſcreetly; and (he ſays) that he is blind that does not ſee this. But who ſo blind as he who will not ſee, that the ſenſe of ſcripture is as plain in all neceſſary points of faith? I am ſure St. Auſtin makes no difference, when he tells us, " * That in thoſe things " which are plainly ſet down in ſcripture, we may " find all thoſe things in which faith and manners " of life are comprehended." And why cannot men, in reference to matters of faith as well as of practice, read the ſcriptures ſenſibly and diſcreetly; without ſuch a rigorous balancing of every word and ſyllable, as will make the ſenſe vaniſh away we know not how? If the ſcripture be but ſufficiently plain to ſuch as will uſe it ſenſibly and diſcreetly, I do not underſtand what greater plainneſs can be deſired in a rule; nor can I imagine what kind of rule it muſt be that can be unexceptionably plain to captious cavillers, and ſuch as are bent to play the fool with it.

De doctr. Chriſt. l. 2.

Well, ſuppoſe the ſcriptures be not ſufficiently clear as to matters of faith, and hereupon I have recourſe to the church for the true ſenſe of ſcripture; muſt I believe the church's ſenſe to be the true ſenſe of ſuch a text, though I ſee it to be plainly contrary to the genuine ſenſe of the words? yes, that I muſt, or elſe I make myſelf, and not the church, judge of the ſenſe of ſcripture, which is the grand hereſy of the proteſtants. But then I muſt not ſuppoſe,

pose, much less believe, that the church's sense of such text is contrary to the genuine meaning of it; no, although I plainly see it to be so: this is hard again on the other hand; especially if it be true which is acknowledged both by Dr. Holden and Mr. Cressy, viz. that though general councils cannot mistake in the points of faith which they decree, yet they may mistake in the confirmation of them from texts of scripture, that is, they may be mistaken about the sense of those texts. And if Mr. S. think his brethren have granted too much, he may see this exemplified in the second council of Nice (to mention no other) which, to establish their doctrine of image-worship, does so palpably abuse and wrest texts of scripture, that I can hardly believe that any papist in the world hath the forehead to own that for the true sense of those texts which is there given by those fathers. SECT. III.

§ 11. Secondly, how the traditionary church can be more certain of the true sense of their traditional doctrines, than the protestants can be of the true sense of scripture? and this is worthy of our enquiry, because if the business be search'd to the bottom, it will appear (besides all other inconveniences, which oral tradition is much more liable to than scripture) that the certain sense and meaning of traditional doctrine is as hard to come at as the sense of scripture. And this I will make appear by necessary consequence from their own concessions. Mr. White and Mr. S. say, that the great security of tradition is this, that it is not tied to certain phrases and set forms of expression, but the same sense is conveyed and settled in mens hearts by various

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various expreſſions. But according to Mr. Ruſhworth, this renders tradition's ſenſe uncertain; for he ſays, "* 'tis impoſſible to put fully, and beyond "all quarrel, the ſame ſenſe in divers words." So that if men do not receive tradition in a ſenſible, common, diſcreet way (as Mr. Ruſhworth ſpeaks concerning reading the ſcriptures) but will come to a rigorous and exact balancing of every particular phraſe, word, and ſyllable, the ſenſe of tradition will be in the very ſame danger of uncertainty, and be liable to vaniſh we know not how. Dr. Holden * lays down theſe two principles, "Firſt, that "no truth can be conveyed down from man to "man but by ſpeech; and ſpeech cannot be but "by words; and all words are either equivocal in "themſelves, or liable to be differently underſtood "by ſeveral perſons. Secondly, that ſuch is the "frame of man's mind, that the ſame truths may "be differently apprehended and underſtood by "different perſons:" and if this be true, then traditional doctrines, if they be delivered by ſpeech and words, will be liable to uncertainties and ambiguities, as to their ſenſe, as well as ſcripture. Mr. Creſſy * tells us, "that reaſon and ex-"perience ſhew, that differences will ariſe even "about the writings of the fathers, and any thing "but the teſtimony of the preſent church." If this be true, tradition wholly falls into uncertainty: for if difference will ariſe about the writings of the fathers how they are to be interpreted, I ſuppoſe the writings of councils will be liable to the ſame inconvenience: and if the whole preſent church cannot declare her ſenſe of any traditional doctrine

* Dial. 2. ſect. 6.

* Analyſ. fidei, l. 1. c. 9.

* Append. c. 6.

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otherwiſe than by a council, (unleſs with the jeſuits they will epitomize the church into the pope) and the decrees of a council cannot be univerſally diſperſed (or at leaſt never uſe to be) but by writing: and if differences will ariſe about the interpretation of that writing, as well as any other, then this preſent infallible authority (which Mr. Creſſy magnifies ſo much for ending of differences) leaves all controverſies ariſing about the ſenſe of tradition as indeterminable as ever; and they muſt for ever remain ſo, till general councils have got the knack of penning their decrees in words which will ſo infallibly expreſs their meaning to the moſt captious caviller, that no difference can poſſibly ariſe about the interpretation of them, or elſe (which will be more ſuitable to this wiſe hypotheſis) till general councils (being convinc'd by Mr. S's demonſtrations) ſhall come to underſtand themſelves ſo well, as not to intruſt their decrees any more to the uncertain way of writing, but for the future to communicate them to the world by the infallible way of oral tradition. And to mention no more, Mr. Knott *, (who agrees with the other thus far, that the certain ſenſe of ſcripture is only to be had from the church) ſpeaks to this purpoſe, that before we can be certain that this is the true ſenſe of ſuch a text, we muſt either be certain that this text is capable of no other ſenſe, as figurative, myſtical, or moral; or if it be, we muſt have ſome certain and infallible means to know in which of them it is taken, which can be known only by revelation. If this be true, then by a fair parity of reaſon, before I can be certain that this is the ſenſe of a doctrinal tradition

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* Anſw. to Chilling. c. 2. ſect. 6.

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dition delivered down to me, I must either be certain that the words in which this tradition was expressed when it was delivered to me, are capable of no other sense (as figurative, mystical, or moral) besides that in which I understood them; or if they be (as certainly they will be) capable of any of these other senses, then must I have some certain and infallible means whereby to know in which of these they are taken: and this can no more be known without a revelation, than which is the true sense of such a text of scripture. If it be said, that the sense of a traditionary doctrine may by different expressions be still farther and farther explained to me till I come certainly to understand the sense of it; this will not help the matter: for if these kinds of cavils be good, that a man cannot be certain of the meaning of any words, till he can by an infallible argument demonstrate either that they cannot be taken, or that they are not taken in any other sense; I say, if this cavil will hold, then every new expression whereby any one shall endeavour to explain any traditional doctrine, is liable to the same inconvenience which those words in which it was first delivered to me were liable to. From all which it is evident, that the traditionary church can be no more certain of the sense of their traditional doctrines, than protestants may be of the sense of scripture.

§ 12. These are his exceptions contained in his second discourse; and of what force they are, hath been examined. But because he foresaw that it might be replied, that these defects might in part be provided against "by history, by the providence of God,

" God, by teſtimonies of councils and fathers, and SECT. III.
" by the ſufficient clearneſs of ſcripture as to the fun-
" damentals;" he endeavours to ſhew that theſe ſig-
nify little to this purpoſe.

Firſt, " Not hiſtory *, becauſe few are skilled P. 17, 18.
" in hiſtory, and they that are not, cannot ſafely
" rely upon thoſe that are skilled, unleſs they knew
" certainly that the hiſtorians whom they rely on
" had ſecure grounds, and not bare hear-ſay for what
" they writ, and that they were not contradicted
" by others either extant or periſhed." How much credit is to be given to uncontrolled hiſtory by the learned, and how much by the vulgar to men of skill, I have already ſhewn. I ſhall only add now, that if this reaſoning be true, it is impoſſible for any man to be certain by hiſtory of any ancient matter of fact, as namely, that there were ſuch perſons as Julius Ceſar and William the conqueror, and that they invaded and conquered England, becauſe (according to him) we cannot know certainly that the hiſtorians, who relate theſe things, and upon whoſe authority we rely, " had ſecure grounds, and
" not bare hear-ſay, for what they writ: and that
" they were not contradicted by others either ex-
" tant or periſhed," is, I am ſure, impoſſible for any man to know: for who can tell now what was contained in thoſe books which are periſhed? ſo that if this be requiſite to make every hiſtorical relation credible, to know certainly that it was not contradicted by any of thoſe books which we do not know what they were, nor what was in them, we can have no certainty of any ancient fact or hiſtory: for who knows certainly that ſome books that are

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periſhed did not contradict whatever is written in books that are extant? nay, if this reaſoning hold, we can have no certainty of any thing conveyed by oral tradition: for what though the prieſt tell me this was the doctrine of CHRIST delivered to him? unleſs I know that all others agree with him in this tradition, I cannot rely upon his teſtimony: nor then neither, in Mr. Knott's * opinion, "becauſe the teſtimony of preachers or paſtors is humane and fallible! unleſs (according to his jargon) a concluſion, deduced from premiſes, one of which is only probable, may be ſufficient to bring our underſtanding to an infallible act of faith, viz. if ſuch a concluſion be taken ſpecificative; whereas if it be taken reduplicative, as it is a concluſion, it can only beget a probable aſſent;" which is to ſay, that conſidered barely as a concluſion, and ſo far as in reaſon it can deſerve aſſent, it is only probable; but conſidered as it ſerves an hypotheſis, and is convenient to be believed with reaſon or without, ſo it is infallible. But to carry the ſuppoſition farther: put the caſe, that the whole preſent age aſſembled in a general council, ſhould declare that ſuch a point was delivered to them; yet (according to Mr. S.) we cannot ſafely rely upon this, unleſs we knew certainly, that thoſe whom they relied on "had ſecure grounds, and not bare hear-ſay, for what they delivered; and that they were not contradicted within the ſpace of 1500 years by any of thoſe that are dead;" which is impoſſible for any one now to know.

* Anſwer to Chilling. c. 1. § 33.

But to ſhew how inconſiſtent he is with himſelf in theſe matters, I will preſent the reader with a paſſage or two in another part of his book, where he endeavours to prove that men may ſafely rely on a general

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and uncontrolled tradition. He tells us, " * That SECT. III.
" the common courſe of humane converſation makes
" it madneſs not to believe great multitudes of * P. 49.
" knowers, if no poſſible conſiderations can awa-
" ken in our reaſon a doubt that they conſpire to de-
" ceive us." And a little after, " * nor can any, * Ibid.
" unleſs their brains rove wildly, or be unſettled even
" to the degree of madneſs, ſuſpect deceit, where ſuch
" multitudes agree unanimouſly in a matter of fact."
Now if men be but ſuppoſed to write, as well as to ſpeak, what they know, and to agree in their writings about matter of fact; then it will be the ſame " madneſs not to believe multitudes of hiſtorians, " where no poſſible conſideration can awaken in our " reaſon a doubt that they have conſpired to deceive " us; and mens brains muſt rove wildly, and be un- " ſettled even to the degree of phrenzy, who ſuſpect " deceit where ſuch multitudes unanimouſly agree in " a matter of fact." And this ſeems to me to be the great unhappineſs of Mr. S's demonſtrations, that they proceed upon contradictory principles; ſo that in order to the demonſtrating of the uncertainty of books and writings, he muſt ſuppoſe all thoſe principles to be uncertain, which he takes to be ſelf-evident and unqueſtionable, when he is to demonſtrate the infallibility of oral tradition.

§ 13. Secondly, he tells us *, " the providence of * P. 38.
" GOD is no ſecurity againſt thoſe contingences the
" ſcriptures are ſubject to; becauſe we cannot be cer-
" tain of divine providence or aſſiſtance to his church,
" but by letter of ſcripture; therefore that muſt firſt
" be proved certain, before we mention the church,
" or GOD's aſſiſtance to her." As if we pretended

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there were any promiſe in ſcripture that GOD would preſerve the letter of it entire and uncorrupted, or as if we could not otherwiſe be aſſured of it; as if the light of natural reaſon could not aſſure us of GOD's providence in general, and of his more eſpecial care of thoſe things which are of greateſt concernment to us, ſuch as this is, that a book containing the method and the terms of ſalvation ſhould be preſerved from any material corruption. He might as well have ſaid, that without the letter of ſcripture we cannot know that there is a GOD.

* P. 18, 19.

§ 14. Thirdly, "Nor (ſays he *) can teſtimonies "of councils and fathers be ſufficient interpreters of "ſcripture." We do not ſay they are. Our principle is, that the ſcripture doth ſufficiently interpret it ſelf, that is, is plain to all capacities, in things neceſſary to be believed and practiſed. And the general conſent of fathers in this doctrine of the ſufficient plainneſs of ſcripture (which I ſhall afterwards ſhew) is a good evidence againſt them. As for obſcure and more doubtful texts, we acknowledge the comments of the fathers to be a good help, but no certain rule of interpretation. And that the papiſts think ſo, as well as we, is plain; inaſmuch as they acknowledge the fathers to differ among themſelves in the interpretation of ſeveral texts: and nothing is more familiar in all popiſh commentators, than to differ from the antient fathers about the ſenſe of ſcripture. And as for councils, Dr. Holden and Mr. Creſſy (as I ſaid before) do not think it neceſſary to believe that always to be the true ſenſe of texts which councils give of them, when they bring them to confirm points of faith. Nay, if any controverſy ariſe about the ſenſe of

of any text of ſcripture, it is impoſſible (according to Mr. Ruſhworth's principles) for a council to decide either that, or any other controverſy: for he * makes it his buſineſs to prove, "that controverſies cannot "be decided by words;" and if this be ſo, then they cannot be decided at all, unleſs he can prove that they may be decided without words, and conſequently that councils may do their work beſt in the quakers way by ſilent meetings. SECT. III.

* Dial. 2. ſect. 8.

§ 15. Fourthly, "Nor can (ſays he *) the clear- "neſs of ſcripture as to fundamentals be any help "againſt theſe defects." Why not?

* P. 20, 21.

Firſt, becauſe "a certain catalogue of fundamen- "tals was never given and agreed to by ſufficient "authority, and yet without this all goes to wreck." I hope not, ſo long as we are ſure that GOD would make nothing neceſſary to be believed but what he hath made plain; and ſo long as men do believe all things that are plainly revealed (which is every one's fault if he do not) men may do well enough without a preciſe catalogue. But ſuppoſe we ſay, that the articles of the apoſtles creed contain all neceſſary matters of ſimple belief; what hath Mr. S. to ſay againſt this? I am ſure the Roman catechiſm, ſet forth by the decree of the council of Trent, ſays * as much as this comes to, viz. "that the apoſtles having receiv- "ed a command to preach the goſpel to every "creature, thought fit to compoſe a form of chriſ- "tian faith, namely to this end, that they might "all think and ſpeak the ſame things, and that there "might be no ſchiſms among thoſe whom they had "called to the unity of faith, but that they might "all be perfect in the ſame ſenſe and the ſame opi-

* Præfat.

"nion:

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" nion : and this profeſſion of the chriſtian faith and " hope, ſo framed by them, the apoſtles called the " ſymbol or creed." Now how this end of bringing men to unity of faith, and making them perfectly of the ſame ſenſe and opinion, could probably be attained by means of the creed, if it did not contain all neceſſary points of ſimple belief, I can by no means underſtand. Beſides, a certain catalogue of fundamentals is as neceſſary for them as for us; and when Mr. S. gives in his, ours is ready. Mr. Chillingworth had a great deſire to have ſeen Mr. Knott's catalogue of fundamentals, and challenged him to produce it, and offered him very fairly, that whenever he might with one hand receive his, he would with the other deliver his own : but Mr. Knott, tho' he ſtill perſiſted in the ſame demand, could never be prevailed with to bring forth his own, but kept it for a ſecret to his dying day. But to put a final ſtop to this canting demand of a catalogue of fundamentals (which yet I perceive I ſhall never be able to do, becauſe it is one of thoſe expletive topicks which popiſh writers, eſpecially thoſe of the loweſt form, do generally make uſe of to help out a book) however, to do what I can towards the ſtopping of it, I deſire Mr. S. to anſwer the reaſons whereby his friend Dr. Holden * ſhews the unreaſonableneſs of this demand, and likewiſe endeavours to prove that ſuch a catalogue would not only be uſeleſs and pernicious if it could be given, but that it is manifeſtly impoſſible to give ſuch a preciſe catalogue.

* Analyſ. fid. l. 1. c. 4.

* P. 21. Secondly, he asks, " * Is it a fundamental that " CHRIST is GOD ? If ſo, whether this be clearer in " ſcripture, than that GOD hath hands, feet, &c."

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To which I answer by another question, is it clear that there are figures in scripture, and that many things are spoken after the manner of men, and by way of condescension and accommodation to our capacities; and that custom and common sense teacheth men to distinguish between things figuratively and properly spoken? If so, why cannot every one easily understand, that when the scripture saith "GOD hath "hands and feet, and that CHRIST is the vine and "the door," these are not to be taken properly, as we take this proposition, that CHRIST is GOD, in which no man hath any reason to suspect a figure? When Mr. S. tells us, "that he percheth upon the "specifical nature of things," would it not offend him, if any one should be so silly as to conclude from hence that Mr. S. believed himself to be a bird, and nature a perch? and yet not only the scriptures, but all sober writers, are free from such forced and fantastical metaphors. I remember that Origen * taxeth Celsus's wilful ignorance in finding fault with the scriptures, for attributing to GOD humane affections, as anger, &c. and tells him, "that any one who "had a mind to understand the scriptures, might "easily see, that such expressions were accommodated to us, and accordingly to be understood; and that no man, that will but compare "these expressions with other passages of scripture, "need to fail of the true sense of them." But (according to Mr. S.) Origen was to blame to find fault with Celsus for thinking that the scriptures did really attribute humane affections to GOD; for how could he think otherwise, when "the most fundamental point is not clearer in scripture, than that "GOD

SECT. III.

* L. 4.

PART. II.

" God hath hands, feet. &c.?" How could Origen in reaſon expect from Celſus (though never ſo great a philoſopher) that he ſhould be able, without the help of oral tradition, to diſtinguiſh between what is ſpoken literally, and what by a certain ſcheme of ſpeech? Theodoret * tells us of one Audæus, who held that God had a humane ſhape, and bodily members; but he does not ſay that the reaſon of this error was, becauſe he made ſcripture the rule of his faith, but expreſly becauſe " he was a fool, and did " fooliſhly underſtand thoſe things which the divine " ſcriptures ſpeak by way of condeſcenſion." So that although Mr. S. is pleaſed to make this wiſe objection, yet it ſeems (according to Theodoret) that men do not miſtake ſuch texts, either for want of oral tradition, or of ſufficient clearneſs in the ſcriptures, but for want of common reaſon and ſenſe. And if Mr. S. know of any rule of faith that is ſecure from all poſſibility of being miſtaken by fooliſh and perverſe men, I would be glad to be acquainted with it, and with him for its ſake.

* Hæret. fabul. l. 4.

SECT. IV.

That ſcripture is a ſufficient rule to the unlearned, and to the moſt rational doubters.

§ 1. IN his next diſcourſe he endeavours to ſhew, that unlearned perſons cannot be juſtified as acting rationally in receiving the ſcripture for the word of God, and relying upon it as a certain rule; becauſe they are not capable of ſatisfaction concerning theſe matters. But I have already ſhewn that they are, and ſhall not repeat the ſame over again. And whereas he ſays *, " that ſeveral profeſſions all pretend " to ſcripture, and yet differ, and damn, and perſe-

* P. 24.

" cute

"cute one another about these differences;" the answer is easy: that they all pretend to scripture, is an argument that they all acknowledge it to be the word of GOD, and the rule of faith; and that they are generally agreed about the sense of those plain texts which contain the fundamental points of faith, is evident in that those several professions acknowledge the articles contained in the apostles creed to be sufficiently delivered in scripture: and if any professions differ about the meaning of plain texts, that is not an argument that plain texts are obscure, but that some men are perverse. And if those professions damn and persecute one another about the meaning of obscure texts, the scripture is not in fault, but those that do so. SECT. IV.

§ 2. And whereas he pretends *, "that the scrip- * P. 25, "ture is not able to satisfy sceptical dissenters and ra- 26, 27. "tional doubters, because nothing under a demon- "stration can satisfy such persons so well concerning "the incorrruptedness of originals, the faithfulness of "translations, &c. but that searching and sincere "wits may still maintain their ground of suspense "with a might it not be otherwise?" This hath been answered already, partly by shewing that the scripture was not intended to satisfy scepticks, and that a demonstration is not sufficient to give satisfaction to them; and partly by shewing that rational doubters may have as much satisfaction concerning those matters, as the nature of the thing will bear; and he is not a rational doubter that desires more.

But that he may see the unreasonableness of this discourse, I shall briefly shew him, that all mankind do in matters of this nature accept of such evidence as falls short of demonstration; and that his great friends

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and masters, from whom he hath taken the main grounds of his book (though he manageth them to less advantage) do frequently acknowledge, that it is reasonable for men to acquiesce in such assurance as falls short of infallibility, and such evidence as is less than demonstration. Do not mankind think themselves sufficiently assured of the antiquity and authors of several books, for which they have not demonstrative evidence? Doth not Aristotle say, that things of a moral and civil nature, and matters of fact done long ago, are incapable of demonstration; and that it is madness to expect it for things of this nature? Are there no passages in books so plain, that a man may be sufficiently satisfied that this and no other is the certain sense of them? if there be none, can any thing be spoken in plainer words than it may be written? if it cannot, how can we be satisfied of the certain sense of any doctrine orally delivered? and if we cannot be so satisfied, where's the certainty of oral tradition? but if books may be written so plainly as that we may be abundantly satisfied that this is the certain sense of such and such passages, then we may reasonably rest satisfied in evidence for these matters short of demonstration. For was ever the sense of any words so plain as that there did not remain this ground of suspense, that those words might be capable of another sense? Mr. Rushworth * says, "that "disputative scholars do find means daily to explicate "the plainest words of an author to a quite different "sense:" and that the world might be furnish'd with an advantageous instance of the possibility of this, Raynaudus * (a writer of their own) hath made a wanton experiment upon the apostles creed, and by a sinister

* Dial. 2. sect. 7.

* De bonis & malis libris.

SECT. IV.

ſiniſter (but poſſible) interpretation, hath made every article of it hereſy and blaſphemy, on purpoſe to ſhew that the plaineſt words are not free from ambiguity. But may be Mr. S. can outdo the Apoſtles, and can deliver the chriſtian doctrine ſo clearly, that he can demonſtrate it impoſſible for any man to put any other ſenſe upon any of his words than that which he intended. I do not know what may be done, but if Mr. S. doth this he muſt both amend his ſtyle and his way of demonſtration.

Is Mr. S. ſufficiently aſſured that there is ſuch a part of the world as America? and can he demonſtrate this to any man without carrying him thither? can he ſhew by any neceſſary argument, that it is naturally impoſſible that all the relations concerning that place ſhould be falſe? when his demonſtrations have done their utmoſt, cannot "* a * P. 27. "ſearching and ſincere wit at leaſt maintain his "ground of ſuſpenſe with a might it not be other-"wiſe?" and, with an is it not poſſible that all men may be liars, or that a company of travellers may have made uſe of their privilege to abuſe the world by falſe reports, and to put a trick upon mankind? or that all thoſe who pretend to go thither, and bring their commodities from thence, may go to ſome other parts of the world, and taking pleaſure in abuſing others in the ſame manner as they have been impoſed upon themſelves, may ſay they have been at America? who can tell but all this may be ſo? and yet I ſuppoſe notwithſtanding the poſſibility of this, no man in his wits is now poſſeſſed with ſo incredibile a folly as to doubt whether there be ſuch a place. The caſe is the

PART I. very ſame as to the certainty of an ancient book, and of the ſenſe of plain expreſſions: we have no demonſtration for theſe things, and we expect none becauſe we know the things are not capable of it. We are not infallibly certain, that any book is ſo ancient as it pretends to be, or that it was written by him whoſe name it bears, or that this is the ſenſe of ſuch and ſuch paſſages in it; it is poſſible all this may be otherwiſe, that is, it implies no contradiction: but we are very well aſſured that it is not; nor hath any prudent man any juſt cauſe to make the leaſt doubt of it. For a bare poſſibility that a thing may be, or not be, is no juſt cauſe of doubting whether a thing be or not. It is poſſible all the people of France may die this night, but I hope the poſſibility of this doth not incline any man in the leaſt to think it will be ſo: it is poſſible the ſun may not riſe to morrow morning; and yet, for all this, I ſuppoſe that no man hath the leaſt doubt but that it will.

§ 3. But becauſe this principle, viz. "That in "matters of religion a man cannot be reaſonably "ſatisfy'd with any thing leſs than that infallible "aſſurance which is wrought by demonſtration,"[3] is the main pillar of Mr. S's book; therefore, beſide what hath been already ſaid to ſhew the unreaſonableneſs of this principle, I ſhall take a little pains to manifeſt to him how much he is contradicted in this by the chief of his brethren of the tradition, viz. Mr. Ruſhworth, Dr. Holden, Mr. Creſſy, and Mr. White, who, beſides Mr. S. and one J. B. are (ſo far as I can learn) all the publick patrons that ever this hypotheſis of oral tradi-

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tion hath had in the world; and if Mr. White (as I have reaſon to believe) was the author of thoſe dialogues which paſs under Ruſhworth's name, the number them is yet leſs. Now if I can ſhew that this principle (eſteem'd by Mr. S. ſo fundamental to this hypotheſis) is plainly contradicted by the principal aſſertors of oral tradition, I ſhall hereby gain one of theſe two things, either that theſe great patrons of oral tradition were ignorant of the true foundation of their own hypotheſis, or that this principle is not neceſſary for the ſupport of it. Not that I would be ſo underſtood as if I did deny that theſe very perſons do ſometimes ſpeak very big words of the neceſſity of infallibility: but if it be their pleaſure to contradict themſelves, as I have no reaſon to be diſpleaſed, ſo neither to be concerned for it; but ſhall leave it to Mr. S. to reconcile them firſt to themſelves, and then (if he pleaſes) afterwards to himſelf. SECT. IV.

§ 4. I begin with Mr. Ruſhworth of immortal memory, for that noble attempt of his, to perſuade the world that nowithſtanding he was the firſt inventor of this hypotheſis of oral tradition, yet he could prove that the church had in all ages owned it, and proceeded upon it as her only rule of faith. He in his third dialogue, * when his nephew objects to him, "that perhaps a proteſtant would ſay "that all his foregoing diſcourſe was but probabili- "ty and likelihood, and therefore to hazard a "man's eſtate upon peradventures, were ſome- "thing hard, and not very rationally done:" replies thus to him, "what ſecurity do your mer- "chants, your ſtateſmen, your ſoldiers, thoſe that

* Sect. 3, & 4.

"go

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" go to law, nay, even thoſe that till your grounds " and work for their livings; what ſecurity, I ſay, " do all theſe go upon? is it greater than the ſe- " curity which theſe grounds afford? ſurely no; " and yet no man eſteems them fooliſh. All hu- " mane affairs are hazardous, and have ſome ad- " venture in them: and therefore he who requires " evident certainty only in matters of religion, diſ- " covers in himſelf a leſs mind to the goods pro- " miſed in the next life, than to theſe which he " ſeeks here in this world upon weaker aſſurance. " Howſoever, the greateſt evidence that can be to " him that is not capable of convincing demon- " ſtrations (which the greateſt part of mankind " fall ſhort of) is but conjectural." So that (according to Mr. Ruſhworth) it is not reaſon and diſcretion, but want of love to GOD and religion, which makes men require greater evidence for matters of religion than for humane affairs, which yet (he tells us) " are hazardous, and have ſome adven- " ture in them," and conſequently are not capable of demonſtration. Beſides, " if demonſtrative evi- " dence be an eſſential property of the rule of faith " (as Mr. S. affirms) then this rule cannot (ac- " cording to Mr. Ruſhworth) be of any uſe to " the greateſt part of mankind, becauſe they are " not capable of convincing demonſtrations."

Ibid. ſect. 6. Again, " do but conſider (ſays he *) how unequal " and unjuſt a condition it is, that the claim of " the preſent church ſhall not be heard, unleſs ſhe " can confute all the peradventures that wit may " invent, and ſolve all the arguments which the in- " finite variety of time, place, and occaſions may " have

" have given way unto; and then you will see how SECT. IV.
" unreasonable an adversary he is, who will not be
" content with any satisfaction, but such as man's na-
" ture scarcely affords." And is it not equally unjust in Mr. S. " not to let scripture's claim be heard, un-
" less we can confute every peradventure [and might
" it not be otherwise] that wit may invent?" See then
" how unreasonable an adversary Mr. S. is, who
" will not be content with any satisfaction, but such
" as (according to Mr. Rushworth) man's nature
" scarcely affords."

Dr. Holden (I confess) states the matter somewhat cautiously, when he tells us, " * that it shall suf- * L. 1 c. 1.
" fice for the present to determine, that the wisdom of
" the creator hath afforded us such an assurance,
" especially of truths necessary to salvation, as is
" suitable to our nature, and best fitted for the safe
" conduct of our lives in moral and religious af-
" fairs:" but if we interpret these general expressions by the passages I before cited out of Mr. Rushworth (as in reason we may, since the doctor is beholden to him for the best part of his book) then nothing can make more against Mr. S's principle.

§ 5. Mr. Cressy in his exomologesis, * says, " that * C. 19.
" such teachers as approached nearest to the foun- sect. 5.
" tain of truth, CHRIST and his apostles, had means
" of informing themselves in apostolical tradition
" incomparably beyond us." Mr. S. may do well to shew what those means were which are so incomparably beyond his infallibility and demonstration. The same author * does very much applaud * C. 32.
Stapleton's determination of the question concerning sect. 3.

the

PART. II. the church's infallibility, which is as follows, "that "the church does not expect to be taught by GOD "immediately by new revelations, but makes use of "several means, &c. as being govern'd not by "apostles, &c. but by ordinary pastors and teachers. "That these pastors in making use of these several "means of decision, proceed not as the apostles did, "with a peculiar infallible direction of the HOLY "SPIRIT, but with a prudential collection not al-"ways necessary. That to the apostles, who were "the first masters of evangelical faith, and founders "of the church, such an infallible certitude of means "was necessary; not so now to the church, &c." If this be true, that an infallible certitude of means is not now necessary to the church; and that her pastors do now in deciding matters of faith proceed only with a prudent collection not always necessary; then it should seem that a searching wit may maintain his ground of suspense, even against their church also, "with a might it not be other-"wise?" Again Mr. Cressy * tells us, "that truth "and our obligation to believe it, is in an higher "degree in scripture than in the decisions of the "church, as Bellarmine acknowledges;" which is to say, that we may have greater assurance of the truth of doctrines contain'd in the scriptures, than we can have of any doctrine from the determination of the church. But if we have the greatest assurance that can be of truths deliver'd to us by the church, as Mr. S. affirms, then I would fain learn of him what that greater degree of assurance is which Bellarmine speaks of, and whether it be greater than the greatest? Not to insist upon that (which yet

*Append. c. 5.

yet I cannot but by the way take notice of) that Mr. Creſſy, by his approbation of this determination of Bellarmine's, doth advance the ſcripture above the church, as to one of the moſt eſſential properties of the rule of faith, viz. the certainty of it. SECT. IV.

But the moſt eminent teſtimony to my purpoſe in Mr. Creſſy, is that famous paſſage * (which hath given ſo much offence to ſeveral of his own church) wherein he acknowledges "the unfortunateneſs (to "him) of the word infallibility," and tells us, "that he could find no ſuch word in any council; "that no neceſſity appeared to him that either he "or any other proteſtant ſhould ever have heard "that word nam'd, and much leſs preſs'd with ſo "much earneſtneſs as of late it has generally been "in diſputations and books of controverſy; and "that Mr. Chillingworth combats this word with "too great ſucceſs, inſomuch that if this word "were once forgotten, or but laid by, Mr. Chilling-"worth's arguments would loſe the greateſt part "of their ſtrength; and that if this word were "confin'd to the ſchools where it was bred, there "would be ſtill no inconvenience: and that ſince "by manifeſt experience the Engliſh proteſtants "think themſelves ſo ſecure, when they have leave "to ſtand or fall by that word, and in very deed "have ſo much to ſay for themſelves when they "are preſſed unneceſſarily with it: ſince likewiſe it "is a word capable of ſo high a ſenſe that we can-"not deviſe one more full and proper to attribute to "GOD himſelf, &c." Since all this is ſo, he thinks he cannot "be blamed, if ſuch reaſons move him "to

* C. 40. ſect. 3, &c.

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" to wiſh that that the proteſtants may never be " invited to combat the authority of the church un- " der that notion." A very ingenuous acknowledg- ment, and as croſs to Mr. S's principle as any thing can be. But the word infallibility was not ſo unfortunate to Mr. Creſſy, as his untoward explication of the fore-cited paſſage in his appendix, which he afterwards publiſhed chiefly by way of vindication of himſelf againſt the learned author of the preface to my lord Falkland's diſcourſe of infallibility. There he tells us *, " that there are ſeveral " degrees of infallibility." And that we may know what degrees of infallibility he thinks neceſſary to be attributed to the church, this following paſſage will inform us: " methinks (he ſays) if GOD have " furniſhed his divine and ſupernatural truth, with " evidence equal to this, that the ſun will ſhine to- " morrow, or that there will be a ſpring and har- " veſt next year, we are infinitely obliged to bleſs " his providence, and juſtly condemned, if we re- " fuſe to believe the leaſt of ſuch truths, as ſhew- " ing leſs affection to ſave our ſouls than the dull " plowmen to ſow their corn, who certainly have " far leſs evidence for their harveſt than catholicks " for their faith; and yet they inſiſt not peeviſhly " upon every capricious objection, nor exact an in- " fallible ſecurity of a plentiful reaping next ſummer, " but notwithſtanding all difficulties and contin- " gencies proceed chearfully in their painful husban- " dry." So that according to this diſcourſe, what- ever degree of aſſurance the church hath, or can give to thoſe who rely upon her, it is plain that no further degree is neceſſary than what the husband-

* Append. ſect. 2, and 3.

man

man when he ſows, hath of a plentiful harveſt, and that men are juſtly condemned if they refuſe to believe the leaſt truth upon ſuch ſecurity, which yet (by his own acknowledgment) is liable to contingencies: nay farther, that men are not reaſonable, "but peeviſh, in exacting infallible ſecurity, and "inſiſting upon every capricious objection, ſuch "as is Mr. S's might it not be otherwiſe?" Now as to this degree of aſſurance, or (as he calls it) infallibility, I cannot but grant what he ſays of it to be moſt true, viz. "that in a ſevere acceptation of "the word, it is not rigorouſly infallible, that "is, (as he explains it) it is not abſolutely impoſ-"ſible nor does it imply a flat contradiction" that the thing whereof we are ſo aſſured may be otherwiſe: but then I utterly deny, that according to any true acceptation of this word, ſuch a degree of aſſurance as he ſpeaks of can be called infallibility; and withal I affirm, that none of thoſe ſeveral degrees of infallibility which he mentions, excepting that only which imports an abſolute impoſſibility, can with any tolerable propriety of ſpeech, or regard to the true meaning and uſe of the word, have the name of infallibility given to them. For infallibility can ſignify nothing elſe but an utter impoſſibility that one ſhould be deceived in that matter as to which he is ſuppoſed to be infallible; and to ſay ſuch a thing is impoſſible, is to ſay that the exiſtence of it implies a flat contradiction: ſo that whoſoever aſſerts degrees of infallibility, is obliged to ſhew that there are degrees of abſolute impoſſibilities, and of perfect contradictions; and he had need of a very ſharp and piercing wit, that is

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PART II. to find out degrees where there neither are nor can be any. Indeed, in reſpect of the objects of knowledge, it is eaſy to conceive how infallibility may be extended to more objects or fewer; but in reſpect of the degree of aſſurance (of which Mr. Creſſy ſpeaks) it is altogether unimaginable how any one can be more or leſs out of all poſſibility of being deceived in thoſe things wherein he is ſuppoſed to be infallible; for no one can be more removed from the poſſibility of being deceived, than he that is out of all poſſibility of being deceived; and whoſoever is leſs than this is not infallible, becauſe he only is ſo who is out of all poſſibility of being deceived in thoſe matters wherein he is ſuppoſed to be infallible: ſo that Mr. Creſſy's lower degrees of infallibility are no degrees of that aſſurance which may properly be called infallible (for that can have no degrees) but of that aſſurance which is leſs than infallible. And he needed not have raiſed all this duſt about the degrees of infallibility, had it not been that by the means of ſuch a cloud he might make the more convenient eſcape out of that ſtrait he was in between the clamours of his own church, and the advantage which his adverſaries made of his free and open diſcourſe againſt infallibility: for any one that carefully reads his book, will find that he underſtands nothing by the infallibility of the church, but "an authority of "obliging all chriſtians to ſubmit to her deciſions," which is no more but what every ſupreme civil judge hath in matters, viz. a power to determine thoſe controverſies that lie before him as well as he can or will, and when that is done every one is

bound

bound to ſubmit to ſuch determinations; but yet for all this, no man ever dreamt a ſupreme civil judge to be infallible more than another man. I do not now diſpute the extent of the church's authority: but if ſhe have no other infallibility but what a full authority of deciſion does ſuppoſe, I am ſure ſhe hath none at all. SECT. IV.

Before I leave Mr. Creſſy, I cannot but take notice how unfortunate and diſingenuous he is in explaining the meaning of theſe words of his own, viz. ["against this word infallibility Mr. Chillingworth's book eſpecially combats, and this with too too great ſucceſs"] which in his appendix ** C. 5. ſect. 6. he interprets thus; "ſucceſs, I mean, not againſt the church, but againſt his own ſoul, and the ſouls of his fellow-engliſh proteſtants, &c." As if one that had wiſhed well to Ceſar ſhould have ſaid, "that Pompey had fought againſt him with too too great ſucceſs;" and being afterwards challenged by Ceſar's party, as having ſaid that Pompey had conquered Ceſar, he ſhould explain himſelf thus, "ſucceſs, I mean not againſt Ceſar, but againſt his own life, and the lives of his followers. Can any thing be finer, than for a man to ſay, that by Pompey's ſucceſs in fighting againſt Ceſar, he means that Ceſar had beaten Pompey? which is no more than if one ſhould take the liberty to interpret white by black.

§ 6. Laſtly, Mr. White doth moſt expreſly contradict this principle of Mr. S's in theſe following paſſages. In his preface to Mr. Ruſhworth he ſays, "that ſuch a certainty as makes the cauſe always work the ſame effect, though it take not away the abſolute poſſibility of working otherwiſe, ought

PART. II. "ought absolutely to be reckoned in the degree of "true certainty; and those authors are mistaken "who undervalue it." So that it seems Mr. S. is mistaken in affirming that a man cannot be certain of any thing so long as there is any possibility that it may be otherwise. In his answer to my lord Falkland, he says, "* that in moral "matters, and such as are subject to humane "action, we must expect such assurance as humane "actions bear. If for the government of your spi- "ritual life you have as much as for the manage- "ment of your natural and civil life, what can you "expect more? Two or three witnesses of men be- "yond exception will cast a man out of not only "his lands but life and all. He that among mer- "chants will not adventure, where there is a hun- "dred to one of gaining, will be accounted a silly "factor: and among soldiers, he that will fear dan- "ger, where but one of a hundred is slain, shall "not escape the stain of cowardice. What then "shall we expect in religion, but to see a main ad- "vantage on the one side which we may rest our- "selves on? and for the rest remember we are men "subject to chance and mutability, and thank GOD "he hath given that assurance in a supernatural "way, which we are contented withal in our civil "ventures and possessions, which nevertheless GOD "knoweth we often love better and would hazard "less than the unknown good of the life to come."

* P. 14, 15

* P. 30. Again, "* If GOD almighty hath in all sorts and "manners provided his church that she may en- "lighten every man in his way that goeth the way "of a man, then let every man consider which is

"the

" the fit way for himſelf, and what in other matters " of that way, he accounteth evidence. And if " there be no intereſt in his ſoul to make him " loth to believe, what in another matter of the " like nature he doth not ſtick at, or heavy to " practiſe what he ſees clearly enough, I fear not " his choice." Once more; directing a man in his ſearch after rational ſatisfaction in matters of religion, he hath this paſſage; " * Beſides this, he * P. 46. " muſt have this care, that he ſeek what the na- " ture of the ſubject can yield, and not as thoſe " phyſicians, who when they have promiſed no leſs " than immortality, can at laſt only reach to ſome " conſervation of health or youth in ſome ſmall " degree: ſo I could wiſh the author to well aſſure " himſelf firſt that there is poſſibly an infallibility, " before he be too earneſt to be contented with no- " thing leſs; for what if humane nature ſhould not " be capable of ſo great a good? would he there- " fore think it fitting to live without any religion, " becauſe he could not get ſuch a one as himſelf " deſired, though with more than a man's wiſh? " Were it not rational to ſee, whether among reli- " gions ſome one have not ſuch notable advantages " over the reſt, as in reaſon it might ſeem humane " nature might be contented withal? Let him caſt " his account with the deareſt things he hath, his " own or friends lives, his eſtate, his hope of poſ- " terity, and ſee upon what terms of advantage " he is ready to venture all theſe; and then return " to religion, and ſee whether, if he do not ven- " ture his ſoul upon the like, it be truly reaſon or " ſome other not confeſſed motive, which with-

" draws

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" draws him. For my own part, as I doubt not " of an infallibility, ſo I doubt not but ſetting that " aſide, there be thoſe excellencies found on the " catholick party which may force a man to pre- " fer it, and to venture all he hath upon it be- " fore all other religions and ſects in the world. " Why then may not one who after long ſearching " findeth no infallibility reſt himſelf on the like, " ſuppoſing man's nature affords no better ? "

Are not theſe fair conceſſions, which the evidence and force of truth have extorted from theſe authors ? So that it ſeems that that which Mr. S. calls " * a " civil piece of atheiſtry," is advanced in moſt ex- preſs words by his beſt friends ; and therefore I hope he will (as he threatens me) " be ſmart with " them in oppoſition to ſo damnable and funda- " mental an error." And whenever he attempts this, I would intreat him to remember that he hath theſe two things to prove : Firſt, that no evidence but demonſtration can give a man ſufficient aſſu- rance of any thing. Secondly, that a bare poſſi- bility that a thing may be otherwiſe, is a rational cauſe of doubting, and a wiſe ground of ſuſpenſe : which when he hath proved, I ſhall not grudge him his infallibility.

* Letter to his anſwerer, p. 5.

SECT.

SECT. V.

SECT. V.

§ 1. THE laſt part of this third diſcourſe endeavours to ſhew, "that the ſcripture is not "convictive of the moſt obſtinate and acute adverſa- "ries." As for the obſtinate, he knows my mind already. Let us ſee why the moſt acute adverſary may not be convinced by ſcripture: becauſe, as he objects *, firſt, "we cannot be certain that this book "is GOD's word, becauſe of the many ſtrange ab- "ſurdities and hereſies in the open letter as it lies, as "that GOD hath hands and feet, &c. and becauſe "of the contradictions in it:" to which I have already returned an anſwer. Secondly, becauſe (as he ſaith *) "we cannot be certain of the truth of the "letter in any particular text, that it was not foiſted "in, or ſome way altered in its ſignificativeneſs; and "if it be a negative propoſition, that the particle "[not] was not inſerted; if affirmative, not left out." And if we pretend to be certain of this, "he de- "mands * our demonſtration for it." But how unreaſonable this demand is, I hope I have ſufficiently ſhewn. And to ſhew it yet further, I ask him, how their church knows, that the particle [not] was not left out of any text in which it is not found in their copies? I know he hath a ready anſwer, viz. by oral tradition. But this (according to him *) "only "reaches to ſcriptures letter ſo far as it is coincident "with the main body of chriſtian doctrine;" concerning the reſt of ſcripture it is impoſſible (according to his own principles) that they ſhould have any ſecurity that the particle [not] was not unduly inſerted, or left out by the tranſcribers. Nay, as to thoſe

That ſcripture is ſufficient to convince the moſt acute adverſaries and that it is ſufficiently certain

* P. 28.

* P. 31.

* P. 31.

* P. 116.

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texts of ſcripture which fall in with the main body of chriſtian doctrine, I demand his demonſtration that the particle [not] was not unduly inſerted or left out, not only in thoſe texts, but alſo in the oral tradition of the doctrines coincident with the ſenſe of thoſe texts. If he ſay, it was impoſſible any age ſhould conſpire to leave out or inſert the particle [not] in the oral tradition; ſo ſay I it was that they ſhould conſpire to leave it out of the written text: but then I differ from him thus far, that I do not think this naturally impoſſible, ſo as that it can rigorouſly be demonſtrated, but only morally impoſſible, ſo that no body hath any reaſon to doubt of it; which to a prudent man is as good as a demonſtration. Pyrrho himſelf never advanced any principle of ſcepticiſm beyond this, viz. that men ought to queſtion the credit of all books, concerning which they cannot demonſtrate as to every ſentence in them, that the particle [not] was not inſerted (if it be affirmative) or left out (if it be negative.) If ſo much be required to free a man from reaſonable doubting concerning a book, how happy are they that have attained to infallibility? What he ſaith concerning the *variæ lectiones* * of ſcripture, hath already had a ſufficient anſwer.

* P. 32.

§ 2. In his fourth diſcourſe he endeavours to ſhew, "* that the ſcripture is not certain in itſelf, and conſequently not aſcertained to us." Firſt, "not certain, materially conſidered * as conſiſting of ſuch and ſuch characters, becauſe books are liable to be burnt, torn, blotted, worn out." We grant it is not impoſſible but that any, or all the books in the world, may be burnt: but then we ſay likewiſe, that a book

* P. 33.

* P. 34.

book so universally dispersed may easily be preserved; SECT. V.
though we have no assurance that GOD will preserve it, in case all men should be so foolish or so careless as to endeavour or suffer the abolition of it. But it seems the scriptures cannot be a rule of faith if they be liable to any external accidents: and this (he tells us) "* though it may seem a remote and impertinent * P. 34.
"exception, yet to one who considers the wise dis-
"positions of divine providence, it will deserve a
"deep consideration; because the salvation of man-
"kind being the end of GOD's making nature, the
"means to it should be more settled, strong and un-
"alterable, than any other piece of nature whatever."
But notwithstanding this wise reason, this exception still seems to me both remote and impertinent: for if this which he calls a reason be a truth, it will from thence necessarily follow not only that the doctrine of CHRIST must be conveyed by such a means as is more unalterable than the course of nature; but also by a clear parity of reason, that all the means of our salvation do operate towards the accomplishing of their end with greater certainty than the fire burns, or the sun shines; which they can never do, unless they operate more necessarily than any natural causes; how they can do so upon voluntary agents, I desire Mr. S. to inform me.

§ 3. He proceeds by a long harangue to shew, "* that not only these material characters in them- * P. 34.
"selves are corruptible, but in complexion with the
"causes, actually laid in the world to preserve them
"entire; because either those causes are material,
"and then they are also liable to continual alterati-
"ons; or spiritual, that is, the minds of men, and

PART II. "from these we may with good reason hope for a "greater degree of constancy, than from any other "piece of nature;" which, by the way, is a very strange paradox, that the actions of voluntary agents have a greater certainty and constancy in them than those of natural agents; of which the fall of angels and men, compared with the continuance of the sun and stars in their first state, is a very good evidence.

* P. 35. § 4. But he adds a caution *, "that they are perfectly unalterable from their nature, and unerrable, "if due circumstances be observed, that is, if due "proposals be made to beget certain knowledge, and "due care used to attend to such proposals." But who can warrant, that due proposals will always be made to men, and due care used by them? If these be uncertain, where's the constancy and unerrableness he talks so much of? so that notwithstanding the constancy of this spiritual cause (the mind of man) of preserving scriptures entire, yet in order to this (as * P. 36. he tells * us) "so many actions are to be done, which "are compounded and made up of an innumerable "multitude of several particulars to be observed, "every of which may be mistaken apart, each being "a distinct little action in its single self, such as is "the transcribing of a whole book, consisting of such "myriads of words, single letters, and tittles or stops; "and the several actions of writing over each of "these so short and cursory, that it prevents diligence, and exceeds humane care, to keep awake "and apply distinct attentions to every of these "distinct actions." Mr. Rushworth * much outdoes * Dial. 2. sect. 7. Mr. S. in these minute cavils, for he tells us, "that "supposing an original copy of CHRIST's words,

"written

" written by one of the evangeliſts in the ſame lan- SECT. V.
" guage, let him have ſet down every word and ſyl-
" lable: yet men converſant in noting the changes
" of meanings in words, will tell us, that divers ac-
" cents in the pronunciation of them, the turning of
" the ſpeaker's head or body this or that way, &c.
" may ſo change the ſenſe of the words, that they
" will ſeem quite different in writing from what they
" were in ſpeaking." I hope that oral and practical tradition hath been careful to preſerve all theſe circumſtances, and hath delivered down CHRIST's doctrine with all the right traditionary accents, nods, and geſtures neceſſary for the underſtanding of it; otherwiſe the omiſſion of theſe may have ſo altered the ſenſe of it, that it may be now quite different from what it was at firſt. But to anſwer Mr. S. we do not pretend to be aſſured that it is naturally impoſſible that the ſcriptures ſhould have been corrupted or changed, but only to be ſufficiently aſſured that they have not received any material alteration, from as good arguments as the nature of the ſubject will bear. But if his reaſon had not been very ſhort and curſory, he might eaſily have reflected that oral tradition is equally liable to all theſe contingencies; " for it doth
" as much prevent diligence, and exceed humane
" care, to keep awake and apply diſtinct attentions
" to the diſtinct actions of ſpeaking, as of writing." And I hope he will not deny, that a doctrine orally delivered, conſiſts of words, and letters, and accents, and ſtops, as well as a doctrine written; and that the ſeveral actions of ſpeaking are as ſhort and curſory as of writing.

§ 5. Secondly,

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§ 5. Secondly, he tells us *, "ſcripture, formally "conſidered, as to its ſignificativeneſs, is alſo uncer- "tain:" Firſt, "†becauſe of the uncertainty of the "letter:" This is already anſwered. Secondly, "* be- "cauſe the certain ſenſe of it is not to be arrived to "by the vulgar, who are deſtitute of languages and "arts." True, where men are not permitted to have the ſcriptures in their own language, and underſtand no other: but where they are allowed the ſcriptures tranſlated into their own language, they may underſtand them; all neceſſary points of faith and practice being ſufficiently plain in any tranſlation of the bible that I know of. And that * eminent wits cannot agree about the ſenſe of texts which concern the main points of faith, hath been ſpoken to already.

* P. 38.
† P. 38.
* P. 38.
* P. 38.

§ 6. As for the reverence he pretends to ſcripture in the concluſion of his fourth diſcourſe, he might have ſpared that, after all the rallery and rudeneſs he hath uſed againſt it. It is eaſy to conjecture, both from his principles and his uncivil expreſſions concerning them, what his eſteem is of thoſe ſacred oracles. Probably it was requiſite in prudence to caſt in a few good words concerning the ſcriptures, for the ſake of the more tender and ſqueamiſh novices of their religion, or (as Mr. Ruſhworth's nephew * ſays frankly and openly) "for the ſatisfaction of indiffe- "rent men, that have been brought up in this verbal "and apparent reſpect of the ſcripture;" who it ſeems are not yet attained to that degree of catholick piety and fortitude, as to endure patiently that the word of GOD ſhould be reviled or ſlighted. Beſides that in reference to thoſe whom they hope hereafter to convert (who might be too much alienated from

* Dial. 2. ſect. 14.

their

their religion, if he had expreſſed nothing but contempt towards a book, which proteſtants and chriſtians in all ages, till the very dregs of popery, have been bred up to a high veneration of) it was not much amiſs to paſs this formal compliment upon the bible; which the wiſe of his religion will eaſily underſtand, and may ſerve to catch the reſt. But let him not deceive himſelf, "GOD is not mocked." SECT. VI.

SECT. VI.

§ 1. SEcondly, he comes to ſhew *, "that the "properties of a rule of faith belong to "oral tradition." And, firſt, he gives a tedious explanation of the nature of this oral practical tradition, which amounts to this; that as in reference to the civil education of children, "they are taught their own "and others names, to write, and read, and exerciſe "their trades:" ſo in reference to religion, "the "children of chriſtians firſt hear ſounds, afterwards "by degrees get dim notions of GOD, CHRIST, SAVIOUR, heaven, hell, virtue, vice, and by degrees "practiſe what they have heard; they are ſhewn to "ſay grace, and their prayers, to hold up their "hands, or perhaps eyes, and to kneel, and other "poſtures. Afterwards they are acquainted with "the creed, ten commandments, and ſacraments, "ſome common forms of prayer, and other practices "of chriſtianity, and are directed to order their lives "accordingly, and are guided in all this by the actions and carriage of the elder faithful; and this "goes on by inſenſible degrees, not by leaps, from a "hundred years to a hundred, but from month to "month,

That the properties of a rule of faith do not belong to oral tradition.

* P. 41.

PART II. "month, and even leſs." If this be all that tradition doth, this is nothing but what is done among proteſtants, and that with greater advantage; becauſe we always teach children to ſay their prayers in a known tongue, ſo as they may underſtand them. And we alſo teach them the creed, and ten commandments, and the ſacraments, ſo many as CHRIST hath inſtituted, and no more. So that if this be ſo infallible a way of conveying the doctrine of chriſtianity, we have it among us: and we do over and beſides inſtruct them in the ſcriptures, which are the authentick inſtrument whereby CHRIST's doctrine is conveyed to us. But then we do not ſuppoſe (as his hypotheſis neceſſarily enforceth him to do) that the chriſtian doctrine is equally taught and learned by all; but by ſome more, by others leſs perfectly, according to the different abilities and diligence of parents and teachers, and the various capacities and diſpoſitions of children; whereas his hypotheſis falls, if all or at leaſt the generality of parents, do not inſtruct their children with the like exactneſs, and if the generality of children do not receive this doctrine in the ſame perfection that it is delivered. For if it be taught or received with any variation, it muſt neceſſarily be ſo conveyed, and theſe variations will grow daily. I had thought he would have told us how all parents do teach their children the whole body of CHRIST's doctrine, and explain to them every part of it in a hundred or a thouſand ſeveral expreſſions ſignifying the ſame ſenſe, and not have inſtanced in two ſet forms, ſuch as the creed, and ten commandments; for according to Mr. White *, "that cannot be a tradition "which is delivered down in ſet words."

* Apolog. p. 81.

§ 2. Having

§ 2. Having thus explained oral tradition, he comes to ſhew that the properties of a rule of faith agree to it. I have already ſhewed, that the true properties of a rule of faith are but two, viz. "That it "be plain and intelligible, and that it be ſufficiently "certain." The firſt of theſe, that oral tradition may deliver a doctrine plainly and intelligibly, I grant him: All the difficulty is about the ſecond property, whether we have ſufficient aſſurance that the doctrine delivered down by oral tradition hath received no corruption or change in its conveyance: and all that he pretends to prove in this diſcourſe, is, that if this rule hath been followed and kept to all along, the chriſtian doctrine neither hath, nor can have received any change, that is, if the next age after the apoſtles did truly, and without any alteration, deliver the chriſtian doctrine to their immediate ſucceſſors, and they to theirs, and ſo on, then upon this ſuppoſition the doctrine of the preſent traditionary church muſt be the very ſame with that which was delivered to the apoſtles. All this is readily granted to him. But that this rule hath always been followed, nay, that it is impoſſible there ſhould have been any deviation from it (as he pretends) this we deny, not only as untrue, but as one of the muſt abſurd propoſitions that ever yet pretended to demonſtrative evidence. SECT. VI.

THE RULE of FAITH.

PART III.

In which Mr. S's demonſtrations and corollaries are examined.

SECT. I.

Conſiderations touching his demonſtrations in general.

§ 1. BEfore I come to ſpeak particularly to his demonſtrations, I ſhall premiſe theſe two conſiderations: Firſt, that (according to the principles of the patrons of tradition) no man can, by his private reaſon, certainly find out the true rule of faith. Secondly, that (according to Mr. S.) the way of demonſtration is no certain way to find out the rule of faith. If either of theſe be made out, his demonſtrations loſe all their force. If the firſt be made good, then he cannot demonſtrate the infallibility of tradition, nor conſequently, that that is the rule of faith. If the ſecond, then the way of demonſtration which he pretends to take, ſignifies nothing.

§ 2. Firſt, no man can (according to the principles of the patrons of tradition) by his private reaſon certainly find out what is the rule of faith. Suppoſe a heathen to be deſirous to inform himſelf of the chriſtian faith; in order to which he is inquiſitive

SECT. I.

inquisitive after some rule by which may take a measure of it, and come certainly to know what it is: he enquires of christians what their rule is, and finds them divided about it, some saying that the scripture, others that oral tradition, is the rule. In this case it is not possible (without a revelation) for this man to find out the rule of faith, but by his own private reason examining and weighing the arguments and pretences of both sides. And when he hath done this, unless he can by his reason demonstrate that the one is a certain and infallible rule, and the other not so, he hath not (according to Mr. S.) found out the rule of faith. But reason can never do this, according to Mr. S. For speaking of demonstrating the certainty of tradition, he tells us, " * that tradition hath for its basis man's " nature, not according to his intellectuals, which " do but darkly grope in the pursuit of science, &c." And again, * speaking how reason brings men to the rule of faith, he uses this comparison " she is " like a dim-sighted man, who used his reason to " find a trusty friend to lead him in the twilight, " and then relied on his guidance rationally with- " out using his own reason at all about the way it " self." So that (according to him) the certainty of tradition cannot be founded on demonstration, because it is not founded in the intellectual part of man, which only can demonstrate. Besides, if it were founded in the intellectual part, yet that can never be able to demonstrate the certainty of tradition, because that faculty which is dim-sighted, and does but grope darkly in the pursuit of science, is uncapable of framing demonstrations. Nor can any

* P. 53.

* Append. 2d. P. 183.

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man understand how dim-sighted reason should see clearly to choose its guide any more than its way, especially if it be considered what a pretty contradiction it is, to say that reason, as it is dim-sighted, can see clearly.

But Mr. Cressy is not contented to call every man's reason dim-sighted, he ventures a step farther, and calls it hoodwink'd and blind: for he tells us,

* Append. c.6. sect.8. † Ibid. sect. 9.

" * that private reason is apparently a most fallible " guide;" and he pities † my lord Falkland's case, because in the search of the true religion he did " betake himself to the casual conduct of blind, hu- " mane, natural reason," which afterwards he calls

* Ibid. sect. 11.

" * a guide that two persons cannot possibly fol- " low together, because no two persons (that ever " followed any other guide beside authority) did " or could think all things to be reasonable that " all others thought so; and by consequence such " a guide that as long as he continues in that office, " there cannot possibly be any church any where: " which (says he) is an infallible eviction that this " is an imaginary seducing guide, since it is im- " possible that that should be a guide appointed " for any christian, which neither CHRIST nor his " apostles, nor any of their followers ever men- " tioned, yea, which formally destroys one of our " twelve articles of the apostles creed, viz. I be- " lieve the holy catholick church." Thus he does by reason clearly and infallibly evince, that reason cannot be otherwise than a most blind and fallible guide. This it is to talk of things when a man looks only upon one side of them; as if because reason has a blind side, and is uncertain in some things,

things, therefore we ought to conclude her univer- SECT. I.
ſally blind and uncertain in every thing; and as if becauſe all men cannot think all things reaſonable which any one man thinks to be ſo, therefore it is to be doubted whether thoſe common principles of reaſon be true, which mankind are generally agreed in. And that Mr. Creſſy ſpeaks here of the uſe of our private reaſon in the finding out of our rule, is clear from what he ſays in the next ſection, viz. "that this hoodwink'd guide (enquiring into "ſcripture, and ſearching after tradition) may poſ- "ſibly ſtumble upon the way to unity and truth, "that is, the true catholick church." If this be true, why does Mr. S. pretend that he can by reaſon demonſtrate the infallibility of tradition, and by this hoodwink'd guide lead men to the true rule of faith? and what a pitiful encouragement would this be to an inquiſitive philoſopher (who knowing no other guide but his reaſon, whereby to find out whether ſcripture or tradition be the rule) to tell him that by the help of this hoodwink'd guide he might poſſibly ſtumble upon the right?

A man may juſtly ſtand amazed at the inconſiſtency of theſe mens diſcourſes and principles. In one mood they are all for demonſtration, and for convincing men in the way of perfect ſcience, which is the true rule of faith: but then again when another fit takes them, there's no ſuch thing as ſcience, humane reaſon grows all on the ſudden dim-ſighted, and at the next word is ſtruck ſtark-blind; and then the very utmoſt that it can do towards the bringing of an unprejudiced and inquiſitive perſon to the true rule of faith, is to leave him in a poſ-

ſibility

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sibility of stumbling upon it; but if he be a heretick that makes use of private reason for his guide, then

* Append. c. 7. sect. 8. "* it is impossible but that he with his blind guide "shall fall into the pit." I cannot, for my part, imagine how they can reconcile the blindness of humane reason with all that noise which they make about science and demonstration; but this I must confess, that these kind of discourses which I meet with in Mr. S. and Mr. Cressy, are very proper arguments to persuade a man of the blindness of humane reason. And indeed there is one passage in Mr. Cressy, which gives me very great satisfaction concerning these matters, where he tells us, "* that "the wit and judgment of catholicks is to re- "nounce their own judgment, and depose their "own wit." Now he that professes to have done this, may write contradictions, and no body ought to challenge him for it. However, it is a very ingenuous acknowledgment, that when he forsook our church and turned papist, he laid aside his judgment and wit; which is just such an heroick act of judgment, as if a man, in a bravery to shew his liberty, would sell himself for a slave. I am glad to understand from an experienced person, what charges a man must be at when he turns roman catholick, namely, that whoever will embrace that religion must forfeit his reason.

* Ibid.

§ 3. Secondly, the way of demonstration is (according to Mr. S.) no certain way to find out the rule of faith. In his 4th appendix * against my lord of Down, one of the eight mines (as he calls them) which he lays to blow up my lord's dissuasive against popery, is this, "That the method "he

* P. 353, & 254.

" he takes in diſſuading cannot be held in reaſon SECT. I.
" to have power to diſſuade, unleſs it be proper
" to that effect, that is, not common to that ef-
" fect and a contrary one. Now, that being moſt
" evidently no method or way to ſuch an effect
" which many follow and take, yet arrive not at
" that effect; 'tis plain to common ſenſe, that my
" lord of Down miſcalls his book a diſſuaſive, and
" that it can have in it no power of moving the
" underſtanding one way or other, unleſs he can
" firſt vouch ſome particularity in the method he
" takes, above what's in others in which we expe-
" rience miſcarriage, &c." If this be true, then his method of demonſtration, is no way to make men certain of what he pretends to demonſtrate, " becauſe that is moſt evidently no way to an effect " which many follow and take, yet arrive not at " that effect; ſo that 'tis plain to common ſenſe " that Mr. S's demonſtrations can have in them " no power of moving the underſtanding one way " or other, unleſs he can vouch ſome particularity " in the demonſtrations he pretends to bring, above " what is in other pretended demonſtrations in " which we experience miſcarriage." Do not Thomas and Scotus (as Mr. White tells us *) all along pretend to demonſtrate? and yet it is generally believed that (at leaſt where they contradict one another) one of them failed in his demonſtrations. Did not Mr Charles Thynne pretend to have demonſtrated that a man at one jump might leap from London to Rome? and yet I do not think any one was ever ſatisfy'd with his demonſtrations. And Mr. S. knows one in the world (whom

* Exetaſis, p. 24.

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I will not name, becauſe he hath ſince ingenuouſly acknowledged his error) who thought he had demonſtrated the quadrature of the circle, and was ſo confident of it as to venture the reputation of his demonſtrations in divinity upon it, and ſome of thoſe divinity demonſtrations were the very ſame with Mr. S's. Since therefore the world hath experienced ſo much miſcarriage in the way of demonſtration, before Mr. S's demonſtrations can be allowed to ſignify any thing, he muſt (according to his own law) vouch ſome particularity in his way and method of demonſtration above what is in other mens. He hath not any where (that I remember) told us what that particularity is, wherein his way of demonſtration is above other mens: nor can I upon the moſt diligent ſearch find any peculiar advantage that his way has more than theirs above-mentioned; unleſs this be one that he pretends to demonſtrate a ſelf-evident principle, and herein I think he hath plainly the advantage of Mr. Charles Thynne; and unleſs this may be counted another advantage, that he has ſo extraordinary a confidence and conceit of his own demonſtrations; and in this particular, I muſt acknowledge that he clearly excels all that have gone before him: In all other things, his way of demonſtration is but like his neighbours.

SECT.

SECT. II.

§ 1. I Come now to examine his demonſtrations of this ſelf-evident principle (as he often calls it) that oral tradition is a certain and infallible way of conveying CHRIST's doctrine from one age to another, without any corruption or change; which is to ſay, that it is impoſſible but that this rule ſhould always have been kept to. That this is not a ſelf-evident principle, needs no other evidence than that he goes about to demonſtrate it. But yet, notwithſtanding this, I think he hath as much reaſon to call this a ſelf-evident principle, as to call his proofs of it demonſtrations. Mr. S's demonſtration *à priori*.

§ 2. In order to his demonſtration *à priori*, he lays * theſe four grounds, which I ſhall ſet down in his own words. Firſt, "that chriſtian doctrine was "at firſt unanimouſly ſettled by the apoſtles, in the "hearts of the faithful, diſperſed in great multitudes "over ſeveral parts of the world." Secondly, "that "this doctrine was firmly believed by all thoſe faith-"ful to be the way to heaven, and the contradict-"ing or deſerting it, to be the way to damnation: "ſo that the greateſt hopes and fears imaginable "were by engaging the divine authority ſtrongly ap-"plied to the minds of the firſt believers, encourag-"ing them to the adhering to that doctrine, and de-"terring them from relinquiſhing it; and indeed "infinitely greater than any other whatever, ſpring-"ing from any temporal conſideration: and that "this was in all ages the perſuaſion of the faith-"ful." Thirdly, "that hopes of good and fears * P. 59, 60.

4.

PART. III.

" of harm ſtrongly applied, are the cauſes of actual " will." Fourthly, " that the thing was feaſible or " within their power: that what they were bred to " was knowable by them. This put, it follows as " certainly, that a great number or body of the firſt " believers, and after faithful in each age, that is, " from age to age, would continue to hold themſelves, " and teach their children as themſelves had been " taught, that is, would follow and ſtick to tradition; " as it doth, that a cauſe put actually cauſing produc- " eth its effect." This is his demonſtration with the grounds of it.

§ 3. To ſhew the vanity and weakneſs of this pretended demonſtration, I ſhall aſſail it theſe three ways; by ſhewing, firſt, that if the grounds of it were true they would conclude too much, and prove that to be impoſſible which common experience evinceth, and himſelf muſt grant to have been. Secondly, that his main grounds are apparently falſe. Thirdly, that his demonſtration is confuted by clear and undeniable inſtances to the contrary.

SECT. III.

The firſt anſwer to his demonſtration.

§ 1. IF the grounds of it were true, they would conclude too much, and prove that to be impoſſible which common experience evinceth, and himſelf muſt grant to have been. For if theſe two principles be true, " that the greateſt hopes and fears " are ſtrongly applied to the minds of all chriſtians; " and that thoſe hopes and fears ſtrongly applied " are the cauſe of actual will to adhere conſtantly " to CHRIST's doctrine;" then from hence it fol-

" lows

lows that none that entertain this doctrine can ever fall from it, becauſe falling from it is inconſiſtent with an actual will of adhering conſtantly to it: for ſuppoſing (as he doth) certain and conſtant cauſes of actual will to adhere to this doctrine, thoſe who entertain it muſt actually will to adhere to it, becauſe a cauſe put actually cauſing produceth its effect, which is conſtant adherence to it. And if this were true, theſe two things would be impoſſible; firſt, that any chriſtian ſhould turn apoſtate or heretick; ſecondly, that any chriſtian ſhould live wickedly: both which not only frequent and undoubted experience doth evince, but himſelf muſt grant *de facto* to have been. SECT. III.

§ 2. Firſt, it would be impoſſible that any chriſtian ſhould turn apoſtate or heretick. Hereſy, according to him, is nothing elſe but the renouncing of tradition. Now he tells us, "* that the firſt renouncers of tradition muſt have been true believers or holders of it ere they renounced it;" and I ſuppoſe there is the ſame reaſon for apoſtates. But if all chriſtians or true believers (as he calls them) have theſe arguments of hope and fear ſtrongly applied, and hope and fear ſtrongly applied be the cauſes of actual will to adhere to this doctrine; 'tis neceſſary all chriſtians ſhould adhere to it, and impoſſible there ſhould be either apoſtates or hereticks. For if theſe cauſes be put "in all the faithful actually cauſing (as the grounds of his demonſtration ſuppoſe) and indefectibleneſs be the proper and neceſſary effect of theſe cauſes," as he alſo ſaith *, then it is impoſſible that where theſe cauſes are put, there ſhould be any defection: for a proper and neceſſary effect cannot

* P. 60.

* P. 75.

PART III.

but be where the cauſes of ſuch an effect are put, eſpecially if they be put actually cauſing; and conſequently 'tis impoſſible that any ſingle chriſtian ſhould ever either totally apoſtatize or fall into hereſy, that is, renounce tradition.

§ 3. And that this is a genuine conſequence from theſe principles (though he will not acknowledge it here, becauſe he ſaw it would ruine his demonſtration) is liberally acknowledged by him in other parts of his diſcourſe. For he tells us, "* that it exceeds "all the power of nature (abſtracting from the cauſes "of madneſs and violent diſeaſe) to blot the know- "ledge of this doctrine out of the ſoul of one ſingle "believer; and * that ſince no man can hold con- "trary to his knowledge, nor doubt of what he holds, "nor change and innovate without knowing he doth "ſo, it is a manifeſt impoſſibility a whole age ſhould "fall into an abſurdity ſo inconſiſtent with the nature "of one ſingle man." And, "* that it is perhaps "impoſſible for one ſingle man to attempt to deceive "poſterity by renouncing tradition." Which paſſages laid together amount to thus much, that it is impoſſible that tradition ſhould fail in any one ſingle perſon. And though in the paſſage laſt cited he ſpeaks faintly, and with a perhaps, as if he apprehended ſome danger in ſpeaking too peremptorily, yet any one would eaſily ſee the laſt to be as impoſſible as any of the reſt. And he himſelf elſewhere, being in the full career of his bombaſt rhetorick, delivers it roundly without fear or wit, "* ſooner may the ſinews of "entire nature by overſtraining crack, and ſhe loſe "all her activity and motion, that is, herſelf, than "one ſingle part of that innumerable multitude "which

* P. 54.
* P. 78.
* P. 89.
* P. 54.

" which integrate that vaſt teſtification which we " call tradition, can poſſibly be violated."

SECT. III.

§ 4. But it may be we deal too hardly with him, and preſs his demonſtration too far, becauſe he tells us he only intends by it to prove that the generality of chriſtians will always adhere to tradition. But if he intended to prove no more but this, he ſhould then have brought a demonſtration that would have concluded no more; but this concludes of all as well as of the generality of chriſtians. A clear evidence that it is no demonſtration, becauſe it concludes that which is evidently falſe, that there can be no apoſtates or hereticks. Beſides, ſuppoſing his demonſtration to conclude only that the generality of chriſtians would always adhere to tradition, this is as plainly confuted by experience, if there be any credit to be given to hiſtory. St. Hierom tells us, " * that Liberius bi- " ſhop of Rome (for all his particular title to infal- " libility built upon tradition, as Mr. S. ſpeaks, co- " roll. 28.) turned Arian. And that * Arianiſm was " eſtabliſhed by the ſynod of Ariminum, which was " a council more general than that of Trent. And " that * almoſt all the churches in the whole world " under the names of peace and of the emperor, were " polluted by communion with the Arians." Again, " that * under the emperor Conſtantius (Euſebius and " Hippatius being conſuls) infidelity was ſubſcribed " under the names of unity and faith. And * that the " whole world groned and wondered to ſee itſelf turned " Arian." And he * uſes this as an argument to the Luciferians, to receive into the church thoſe who had been defiled with the hereſy of Arius, becauſe the number of thoſe who had kept themſelves orthodox

* Chron. ad annum Chriſt. 352.

* Ad an. 363.

* Ad an. 364.

Adverſ. Lucifer.

* Ibid.

* Ibid.

was

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was exceeding ſmall: "for (ſays he) the ſynod of "Nice which conſiſted of above three hundred bi- "ſhops, received eight Arian biſhops whom they "might have caſt out without any great loſs to the "church. I wonder then how ſome, and thoſe the "followers of the Nicene faith, can think that three "confeſſors (viz. Athanaſius, Hilarius, Euſebius) "ought not to do that in caſe of neceſſity for the "good and ſafety of the whole world, which ſo ma- "ny and ſo excellent perſons did voluntarily." It ſeems Arianiſm had prevailed very far, when St. Hierom could not name above three eminent perſons in the church who had preſerved themſelves untainted with it. Again, "* Arius in Alexandria was at firſt "but one ſpark, but becauſe it was not preſently ex- "tinguiſh'd, it broke out into a flame which de- "voured the whole world." Gregory Nazianzen * likewiſe tells us to the ſame purpoſe, "that the Arian "hereſy ſeized upon the greateſt part of the church." And to ſhew that he knew nothing of Mr. S's demonſtration of the indefectibility of the generality of chriſtians, he asks, "* where are thoſe that define "the church by multitude, and deſpiſe the little flock, "&c.?" And this hereſy was of a long continuance, for from its riſe which happened in the 20th year of Conſtantine, it continued (as Joh. Abbas * hath calculated it) 266 years. And the Pelagian hereſy (if we may believe Bradwardine, one of the great champions of the church againſt it) did in a manner prevail as much as Arianiſm, as the ſaid author complains in his preface to his book, "* that almoſt the whole "world was run after Pelagius into error." Will Mr. S. now ſay, "that in the height of theſe hereſies "the

* In epiſt. ad Galat. l. 3.

* Orat. 20. & 21.

* Orat. 25.

* Chron. ad annum octavum Maurit.

* Cauſa Dei.

" the generality of chriſtians did firmly adhere to " tradition?" If he ſay they did, let him anſwer the expreſs teſtimonies produced to the contrary: but if they did not, then his demonſtration alſo fails as to the generality of chriſtians. And if the greater part of chriſtians may fall off from tradition, what demonſtration can make it impoſſible for the leſſer to do ſo? who will ſay it is in reaſon impoſſible that a thouſand perſons ſhould relinquiſh tradition, though nine hundred of them have already done it, and though the remainder be no otherwiſe ſecured from doing ſo, than thoſe were who have actually relinquiſhed it? Now is not this a clear evidence that this which he calls a demonſtration *à priori* is no ſuch thing? becauſe every demonſtration *à priori*, muſt be from cauſes which are neceſſary, whereas his demonſtration is from voluntary cauſes. So that unleſs he can prove that voluntary cauſes are neceſſary, he ſhall never demonſtrate that it is impoſſible for the generality of any company of men to err, who have every one of them free-will, and are every one of them liable to paſſion and miſtake. SECT. III.

§ 5. From all this it appears, that his whole diſcourſe about the original and progreſs of hereſy, and the multitudes of hereticks in ſeveral ages, is as clear a confutation of his own demonſtration as can be deſired. The only thing that he offers in that diſcourſe, to prevent this objection, which he foreſaw it liable to, is this, " it is not (ſays he *) to be expected " but that ſome contingencies ſhould have place, " where a whole ſpecies in a manner is to be wrought " upon; it ſufficeth that the cauſes to preſerve faith " inde-

* P. 65.

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" indeficiently entire, are as efficacious as thoſe " which are laid for the preſervation of mankind; " the virtue of faith not being to continue longer " than mankind its only ſubject does; and they will " eaſily appear as efficacious as the other, if we " conſider the ſtrength of thoſe cauſes before expli- " cated, and reflect that they are effectively power- " ful to make multitudes daily debar themſelves of " thoſe pleaſures which are the cauſes of mankind's " propagation; and if we look into hiſtory for ex- " perience of what hath paſſed in the world ſince " the propagating of chriſtianity, we ſhall find " more particulars failing in propagating their " kind, than their faith." To which I anſwer,

Firſt, that it may reaſonably be expected there ſhould be no contingencies in any particulars, where cauſes of actual will are ſuppoſed to be put in all; " becauſe (as he ſays truly) a cauſe put actually cauſing " cannot but produce its effect." Suppoſe then conſtant cauſes laid in all mankind of an actual will to ſpeak truth to the beſt of their knowledge, were it not reaſonable to expect that there would be no ſuch contingency to the world's end, as that any man ſhould tell a lye? Nay, it were madneſs for any man to think any ſuch contingency ſhould be, ſuppoſing cauſes actually cauſing men always to ſpeak truth.

Secondly, it is far from truth, " that the cauſes to " preſerve faith indeficiently entire, are as efficacious " as thoſe which are laid for the propagation of " mankind," And whereas he would prove the ſtrength of thoſe cauſes which are laid to preſerve faith, " becauſe they are effectively powerful to " make multitudes daily debar themſelves of thoſe

" pleaſures

" pleaſures which are the cauſes of mankind's propa- SECT. III.
" gation;" I hope no body that hath read the innumerable complaints which occur in their own hiſtorians, and others of the beſt and moſt credible of their own writers, of more than one age concerning the general viciouſneſs and debauchery of their prieſts and monks, will be over-forward to believe that all thoſe who debar themſelves of lawful marriage, do abſtain from thoſe unlawful pleaſures.

§ 6. But nothing can be more impudent than what he adds, " that if we look into hiſtories for " experience of what hath paſs'd in the world ſince " the firſt planting of chriſtianity, we ſhall find far " more particulars failing in propagating their kind, " than their faith." Do any hiſtories confirm it to have been the experience of the world, that the far greateſt part of the world did in any age give over propagating their kind? But hiſtories do confirm that the far greateſt part of the chriſtian world did fall off to Arianiſm and Pelagianiſm; and conſequently, as he ſuppoſeth, did deſert and renounce tradition. Did ever whole nations and vaſt territories of the world either wholly, or for far the greateſt part of them, take up an humour againſt propagating mankind? And yet both hiſtory, and the experience of the preſent age aſſures us, that a great part of Aſia and of Africk (where the moſt flouriſhing churches in the world once were) are fallen off from chriſtianity, and become either mahometans or heathens. In Africk almoſt all thoſe vaſt regions, which chriſtianity had from heatheniſm, mahometaniſm hath regained from chriſtianity. All the north part of Africk lying along the

PART III. Mediterranean (where christianity flourished once as much as ever it did at Rome) is at this time utterly void of christians, excepting a few towns in the hands of the European princes. And not to mention all particular places, the large region of Nubia, which had (as is thought) from the apostles time professed the christian faith, hath within these 150 years for want of ministers (as Alvarez * tells us) quitted christianity, and is partly revolted to heathenism, partly fallen off to mahometanism. So that it seems, that notwithstanding the argument of hope and fear, the very teachers of tradition, may fail in a largely extended church. As for Asia, in the easterly parts of it, there is not now one christian to four of what there were 500 years ago; and in the more southerly parts of it (where christianity had taken the deepest root) the christians are far inferior in number to the idolaters and mahometans, and do daily decrease. What thinks Mr. S. of all this? Have those christian nations which are turn'd mahometans and pagans failed in their faith or not? If they have, I expect from him clear instances of more that have failed in propagating their kind.

* Hist. Æthiop.

§ 7. But, besides those who have totally apostatized from christianity, hath not the whole Greek church, with the jacobites and nestorians, and all those other sects, which agree with, and depend upon these, and which, taken together, are manifoldly greater than the Roman church; I say, have not all these renounced tradition for several ages? And here in Europe, hath not a great part of Poland, Hungary, both Germany's, France, and Switzerland: have not the kingdoms of Great-Britain, Denmark, Sweden,

Sweden, and a considerable part of Ireland in Mr. S's opinion deserted tradition? If I should once see a whole nation fail, because no body would marry and contribute to the propagation of mankind; and should find this sullen humour to prevail in several nations, and to overspread vast parts of the world, I should then in good earnest think it possible for mankind to fail; unless I could shew it impossible for other nations to do that which I see some to have done, who were every whit as unlikely to have done it. So that whatever cause he assigns of heresy, "* as pride, ambition, lust," or any other vice or interest, if these can take place in whole nations, and make them renounce tradition, "then where's "the efficacy of the causes to preserve faith indefi- "ciently entire in any?" For the demonstration holds as strongly for all christians as for any. SECT. III. * P. 67.

§ 8. Secondly, from these grounds it would follow that no christian can live wickedly; because the end of faith being a good life, the arguments of hope and fear must in all reason be as powerful and efficacious causes of a good life, as of a true belief. And that his demonstration proves the one as much as the other, will be evident from his own reasoning; for he *argues in this manner, "Good "is the proper object of the will; good proposed "makes the will to desire that good, and consequently "the known means to obtain it: now infinite goods "and harms sufficiently proposed are of their own "nature incomparably more powerful causes to carry "the will than temporal ones. Since then, when "two causes are counterpoised, the lesser, when it "comes to execution, is no cause as to the substance * P. 62.

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" of that effect, it follows that there is no cause to " move the wills of a world of believers to be " willing to do that which they judge would lose " themselves and their posterity infinite goods, and " bring them infinite harms, &c. in case a sufficient " proposal or application be not wanting," which he tells us * is not wanting, " because christianity " urged to execution gives its followers a new life " and a new nature, than which a nearer application " cannot be imagined." Doth not this argument extend to the lives of christians, as well as their belief? So that he may as well infer from these grounds, that it is impossible that those who profess christianity should live contrary to it, as that they should fail to deliver down the doctrine of CHRIST; because whatever can be an inducement and temptation to any man, to contradict this doctrine by his practice, may equally prevail upon him to falsify it. For why should men make any more scruple of damning themselves and their posterity by teaching them false doctrines, than by living wicked lives? which are equally pernicious with heretical doctrines, not only upon account of the bad influence which such examples of fathers and teachers are like to have upon their scholars, but likewise they are one of the strongest arguments in the world to persuade them, that their teachers do not themselves believe that religion which they teach; for if they did, they would live according to it. Why should any man think, that those arguments of hope and fear which will not prevail upon the generality of christians to make them live holy lives, should be so necessarily efficacious to make them so much concerned for the preserving of

* P. 65.

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a right belief? Nay, we have great reaſon to believe that ſuch perſons will endeavour as much as may be, to bend and accommodate their belief to their lives. And this is the true ſource of thoſe innovations in faith, for which we challenge the church of Rome; which any man may eaſily diſcern, who will but conſider how all their new doctrines are fitted to a ſecular intereſt, and a gratifying that inordinate appetite after riches and dominion which reigns in the court of Rome, and in the upper part of the clergy of that church. SECT. IV.

SECT. IV.

§ 1. SEcondly, the main grounds of his demonſtration are apparently falſe: for, The ſecond anſwer to his demonſtration.

Firſt, this demonſtration ſuppoſeth that the generality of chriſtian parents in all ages perfectly underſtood the doctrine of CHRIST, and did not miſtake any part of it; that they remembred it perfectly, and that they were faithful and diligent to inſtruct their children in it; which is as contrary to experience as that the generality of chriſtians are knowing and honeſt. It ſuppoſeth likewiſe, that this doctrine, and every ſubſtantial part of it, was received and remembred by the generality of children as it was taught; and was underſtood perfectly by them without the leaſt material miſtake: ſo he tells us, "* that the ſubſtance of faith comes clad in ſuch "plain matters of fact, that the moſt ſtupid man "living cannot poſſibly be ignorant of it." But whether this be reaſonable to be ſuppoſed or no, may eaſily be determined, not only from every man's own

* P. 53.

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own experience of the world, but from a more advantageous instance of the experience of the first age of christianity. Was there ever a more knowing and diligent teacher of this doctrine than our saviour? and yet his disciples fell into many mistakes concerning it: so that in order to the certain propagating of it, the wisdom of GOD thought it requisite to endue even those who had learned this doctrine from himself with an infallible spirit, by which they might be led into all truth, and secured from error and mistake; which had been unnecessary, had it been impossible for them to mistake this doctrine, The apostles, who taught the world by an infallible spirit, and with infinitely more advantage than ordinary parents can teach their children, yet in all the churches which they planted, they found christians very apt to mistake and pervert their doctrine, as appears by their frequent complaints in most of their epistles. Nay the apo-

* Heb. v. 11, 12.

stle chargeth the generality of the Hebrews * with such a degree of dulness and stupidity, that after fitting time and means of instruction they were still ignorant of the very principles of christianity: so he tells them, "that when for the time they ought "to be teachers of others, they had need that one "should teach them again which be the first prin-"ples of the oracles of GOD." And St. Hierom

* Adverf. Lucifer. ian

tells us, "* that the primitive churches were taint-"ed with many gross errors whilst the apostles were "alive, and the blood of CHRIST yet warm in "Judea." But it may be there have been better teachers since, and children are more apt to learn now than men were then. Who knows how the world may be changed?

§ 2. Se-

§ 2. Secondly, this demonſtration ſuppoſeth the hopes and fears which chriſtian religion applies to mens minds to be certain and neceſſary cauſes of actual will in men to adhere to the doctrine of CHRIST; and conſequently that they muſt neceſſarily adhere to it. That he ſuppoſeth them to be neceſſary, I have his own word for it; for he tells us, " * that he hath endeavoured to demonſtrate " the indefectibleneſs of tradition as the proper and " neceſſary effect of thoſe cauſes which preſerve and " continue tradition on foot;" and what thoſe cauſes are he told us before, " * that they are " hopes and fears ſtrongly applied." But I hope that the indefectibleneſs of tradition cannot be a neceſſary effect of the ſtrong application of thoſe hopes and fears, unleſs thoſe hopes and fears be a neceſſary cauſe of that effect. And indeed this is ſufficiently implied in his ſaying, " that they are " the cauſes of actual will in chriſtians to adhere to " tradition." For if theſe cauſes of actual will be conſtant (as he muſt ſuppoſe) then they are certain and neceſſary and infallible cauſes of adhering to this doctrine. For whatever is in act is neceſſary while it is ſo, and if it be conſtantly in act, the effect is always neceſſary. But what a wild ſuppoſition is this, that moral motives and arguments working upon a free principle, the will of man, do neceſſarily produce their effect? Is it neceſſary that the hopes of heaven and the fears of hell ſhould keep chriſtians conſtant to the doctrine of CHRIST? and is it not as neceſſary that theſe arguments ſhould prevail upon them to the practice of it? It is in vain to go about to demonſtrate that all men muſt

SECT. IV.

* P. 75.

* P. 60.

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must be good who have sufficient arguments propounded to them, when experience tells us the contrary. Nay, it is in reason impossible that moral arguments should be of a necessary and infallible efficacy, because they are always propounded to a free agent, who may choose whether he will yield to them or not. Indeed it is always reasonable that men should yield to them, and if they be reasonable they will; but so long as they are free, it can never be infallibly certain that they will. And if men be not free, it is no virtue at all in them to be wrought upon by these arguments. For what virtue can it be in any man to entertain the christian doctrine, and adhere to it, and live accordingly, if he does all this necessarily, that is, whether he will or no, and can no more choose whether he will do so or not, than whether he will see the light when the sun shines upon his open eyes, or whether he will hear a sound when all the bells in the town are ringing in his ears, or (to use Mr. S's * similitudes) whether he will "feel heat, cold, pain, "pleasure, or any other material quality that affects "his senses." We see then how unreasonable his suppositions are, and yet without these grounds his demonstration falls. For if it be possible that christians may mistake or forget the doctrine of CHRIST, or any part of it, or be defective in diligence to instruct others in it; or if it be possible that the will of man which is free, may not be necessarily and infallibly swayed by the arguments of hope and fear; then it is possible that tradition may fail. And is not this a good demonstration which supports its self upon such principles as do directly affront

* P. 53.

affront the conſtant experience, and the cleareſt reaſon of mankind? SECT. IV.

§ 3. And here I cannot but take notice how inconſiſtent he is to himſelf in laying the grounds of tradition's certainty. In one part of his book he tells us, " * that tradition hath for its baſis the beſt " nature in the univerſe, that is, man's; not ac- " cording to his moral part, defectible by reaſon " of original corruption; nor yet his intellectuals, " darkly groping in the purſuit of ſcience, &c. " but according to thoſe faculties in him perfectly " and neceſſarily ſubject to the operations and ſtrokes " of nature, that is, his eyes, ears, handling, and " the direct impreſſion of knowledge, as naturally " and neceſſarily iſſuing from the affecting thoſe " ſenſes, as it is to feel heat, cold, pain, pleaſure " or any other material quality." So that according to this diſcourſe, the baſis of tradition is not man's nature conſidered as moral, and capable of intellectual reflection; for in this conſideration it is dark and defectible: but man's nature conſidered only as capable of direct ſenſitive knowledge, as acting naturally and neceſſarily. Which is to ſay, that tradition is founded in the nature of man conſidered not as a man but a brute; under which conſideration, I ſee no reaſon why he ſhould call it the beſt nature in the univerſe. But now, how will he reconcile this diſcourſe with the grounds of his demonſtrations? where he tells us, that the ſtability of tradition is founded in the arguments of hope and fear, the objects of which being future and at a diſtance cannot work upon a man immediately by direct impreſſions upon his ſenſes, but muſt work

* P. 53.

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upon him by way of intellectual reflections and consideration. For I hope he will not deny but that the arguments of hope and fear work upon man according to his moral and intellectual part, else how are they arguments? and if man according to his moral part be (as he says) defectible, how can the indefectibility of tradition be founded in those arguments which work upon man only according to his moral part? I have purposely all along (both for the reader's ease and mine own) neglected to take notice of several of his inconsistences; but these are such clear and transparent contradictions, that I could do no less than make an example of them.

SECT. V.

§ 1. THirdly, this Demonstration is confuted by clear and undeniable instances to the contrary. I will mention but two.

First, the tradition of the one true GOD, which was the easiest to be preserved of any doctrine in the World, being short and plain, planted in every man's nature, and perfectly suited to the reason of mankind. And yet this tradition, not having past through many hands (by reason of the long age of man) was so defaced and corrupted, that the world did lapse into polytheism and idolatry. Now a man that were so hardy as to demonstrate against matter of fact, might by a stronger demonstration than Mr. S's, prove that though it be certain this tradition hath failed, yet it was impossible it should fail; as Zeno demonstrated the impossibility of motion against Diogenes walking before his eyes. "For

"the

" the doctrine of the one true GOD was settled in the SECT. V.
" heart of Noah, and firmly believed by him to be
" the way to happiness, and the contradicting or de-
" serting of this to be the way to misery." And this doctrine was by him so taught to his children, who were encouraged by these motives to adhere to this doctrine, and to propagate it to their children, and were deterred by them from relinquishing it. And this was in all ages the persuasion of the faithful. Now the hopes of happiness, and the fears of misery strongly applied, are the causes of actual will. Besides, the thing was feasible, or within their power; that is, what they were bred to was knowable by them, and that much more easily than any other doctrine whatsoever, being short, and plain, and natural. " This put, it follows as certainly that a
" great number in each age would continue to hold
" themselves, and teach their children as themselves
" had been taught, that is, would follow and stick
" to this tradition of the one true GOD, as it doth
" that a cause put actually causing produceth its ef-
" fect. Actually I say; for since the cause is put,
" and the patient disposed, it follows inevitably that
" the cause is put still actually causing." This demonstration which concludes an apparent falsehood, hath the whole strength of Mr. S's, and several advantages beyond it. For the doctrine conveyed by this tradition is the most important, being the first principle of all religion; the danger of corrupting it as great, the facility of preserving it much greater, than of the christian doctrine, for the causes beforementioned. And yet, after all, it signifies nothing against certain experience, and unquestionable matter

PART III. of fact; only it sufficiently shews the vanity of Mr. S's pretended demonstration, built upon the same or weaker grounds.

§ 2. Secondly, the other instance shall be in the Greek church, who received the christian doctrine as entire from the apostles, and had as great an obligation to propagate it truly to posterity, and the same fears and hopes strongly applied to be the actual causes of will; in a word, all the same arguments and causes to preserve and continue tradition on foot, which the Roman church had; and yet, to the utter confusion of Mr. S's demonstration, tradition hath failed among them. For as speculators, they deny the procession of the HOLY GHOST from the SON; and as testifiers, they disown any such doctrine to have been delivered to them by the precedent age, or to any other age of their church by the apostles as the doctrine of CHRIST.

§ 3. To this instance of the Greek church, because Mr. White hath offered something by way of answer, I shall here consider it. He tells us, "* that "the plea of the Greek church is non-tradition; al- "ledging only this, that their fathers did not deliver "the doctrine of the procession of the HOLY "GHOST; not that they say the contrary; which "clearly demonstrates there are no opposite tradi- "tions between them and us." But this was not the thing Mr. White was concerned to do, to demonstrate there were no opposite traditions between the Greeks and the Latins, but to secure his main demonstration of the impossibility of tradition's failing against this instance. For that the Greeks have no such tradition as this, "that the HOLY GHOST "pro-

* Apology for tradition, p. 51.

" proceeds from the SON" is as good evidence of the failure of tradition as if they had a positive tradition, " that he proceeds only from the FATHER;" especially if we consider that they * charge the Latin church with innovation in this matter, and say that the addition of that clause, " of the procession from the SON also," is a corruption of the ancient faith, and a deviliſh invention. Why then does Mr. White go about to baffle ſo material an objection (and, I fear, his own conſcience likewiſe) by a pitiful evaſion inſtead of a ſolid anſwer? What though there be no oppoſite traditions between the Greek and Latin church, yet if their faith be oppoſite, will it not from hence follow that tradition hath failed in one of them? I wonder that Mr. White, who hath ſo very well confuted the infallibility of popes and councils, and thereby undermined the very foundation of that religion, ſhould not by the ſame light of reaſon diſcover the fondneſs of his own opinion concerning the infallibility of oral tradition, which hath more and greater abſurdities in it than that which he confutes. And to ſhew Mr. White the abſurdity of it, I will apply his demonſtration of the infallibility of chriſtian tradition in general, to the Greek church in particular; by which every one will ſee that it does as ſtrongly prove the impoſſibility of tradition's failing in the Greek church, as in the Roman-catholick, as they are pleaſed to call it. His demonſtration is this, " * CHRIST commanded his apoſtles to preach " to all the world, and leſt any one ſhould doubt " of the effect, he ſent his SPIRIT into them to bring " to their remembrance what he had taught them; " which SPIRIT did not only give them a power to " do

SECT. V.

* Phoc. ep. 7.

* De fid. & theol. tract 1. ſect. 4.

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" do what he inclined them to, but did cauſe them " actually to do it." I cannot but take notice by the way, of the ill conſequence of this, which is, that men may doubt whether thoſe who are to teach the doctrine of CHRIST will remember it, and teach it to others, unleſs they have that extraordinary and efficacious aſſiſtance of the HOLY GHOST which the apoſtles had: if this be true, his demonſtration is at an end, for he cannot plead that this aſſiſtance hath been continued ever ſince the apoſtles. He proceeds, " the apoſtles preached this doctrine; the na- " tions underſtood it, lived according to it, and " valued it as that which was neceſſary to them and " their poſterity, incomparably beyond any thing " elſe." All this I ſuppoſe done to and by the Greeks as well as any other nation. " Theſe things " being put, it cannot enter into any man's under- " ſtanding, but that the chriſtian [Greeks] of the " firſt age, being the ſcholars of the apoſtles, could " and would earneſtly commend the chriſtian doc- " trine to their poſterity; if ſo, it is evident that they " did. So that the continuance of purity of the " faith in the [Greek] church is founded upon this, " that fathers always delivered the ſame doctrine to " their children which they had received from their " fathers, and did believe it under this very notion " and title as received; nor could any one [of that " church] deliver another doctrine under this title, " but he would be convinced of a lye by the reſt; " and if the whole [Greek] church ſhould endeavour " to deliver a new doctrine under that title, [and " there's the ſame reaſon if they ſhould leave out " any article of the old doctrine] that whole age " would

" would be in their consciences condemned of per- SECT. V.
" fidiousness and parricide. Now this is as impos-
" sible as it is that all mankind should conspire to
" kill themselves." And he afterwards * gives the * Ibid. sect 5.
reason why it is so impossible that tradition should fail, and it is a very bold and saucy one, " that if " the tradition of the christian faith be not more " firm than the course of the sun and moon, and " the propagation of mankind, then GOD hath " shewn himself an unskilful artificer." What is there in all this demonstration, which may not be accommodated to the Greek church with as much force and advantage as to the catholick? unless he can shew that it is very possible that all the men in Greece may conspire to kill themselves, but yet absolutely impossible that all the men in the world should do so; which I am sure he cannot shew, unless he can demonstrate, that though it be possible for a million of as wise men as any are to be found in the world together, to conspire to do a foolish action, yet it is impossible that a hundred millions not one jot wiser than the other, should agree together to the doing of it.

§ 4. From all this it appears, that Mr. White's answer to this objection doth not signify any thing to his purpose. For if the procession of the HOLY GHOST was part of CHRIST's doctrine, then it was delivered by the apostles to the Greek church; if so, they could not fail to deliver it down to the next age, and that to the next, and so on; but it seems they have failed. " Where then is the force of hopes and " fears strongly applied? where are the certain " causes of actual will to adhere to this doctrine?

" why

PART III. "why is not the effect produced, the causes being "put actually causing?" If the apostles delivered this doctrine, oral tradition is so clear and unmistakable,

* P. 53, & 54. "and * brings down faith clad in such plain matters "of fact, that the most stupid man living (much "less the Greeks, that were the flower of mankind)

* Ibid. "could not possibly be ignorant of it; nay *, it ex-"ceeds all the power of nature to blot knowledge "thus fixed out of the soul of one single believer

* P. 78. "(much more of so vast a church) And * since "no man can hold contrary to his knowledge, or "doubt of what he holds, nor change and innovate "without knowing he did so, 'tis a manifest impos-"sibility, a whole church should in any age fall into "an absurdity so inconsistent with the nature of one

* P. 86. "single man. And since * 'tis natural for every "man to speak truth, and grace is to perfect nature "in whatever is good in it, it follows that one truly "christian heart is far more fixed to veracity, than "others not imbued with these heavenly tenets; and "consequently that a multitude of such must incom-"parably exceed in point of testifying the same num-"ber of others, unfortified by CHRIST's doctrine."

* P. 89. And since "* such a thought cannot enter into the "most depraved nature, as to harm another without "any good to himself, and yet this must be if we "put christian fathers mis-teaching their children un-"received doctrines for received (and I hope for the "same reason, received doctrines for unreceived) con-"trary to their knowledge. For supposing sanctity "in the (Greek) church (and why may we not as "well as in the Latin) that is, that multitudes in it "make heaven their first love, and look on spiritual

"goods,

" goods, as their main concern, &c. it follows, that SECT. V.
" had the fathers of that church, in any age, consented
" to mislead their posterity from what themselves (not
" only) conceited (but knew) to be true, they should do
" the most extreme harm imaginable to others with-
" out any the least good to themselves: which is per-
" haps impossible in one single man, more in few, but
" infinitely in a multitude, especially of good men."

§ 5. Thus I might apply the rest of his ranting rhetorick (but that I am weary of transcribing it) concerning " * the natural love of parents to their * P. 90, 91.
" children" (unless we suppose the Greek church destitute of it) which must needs engage them to use the means proper to bring them to heaven, and save them from hell: as also concerning " the natural care
" men have of not losing their credit by telling per-
" nicious lies." And, not to omit the best part of his demonstration * (which was therefore prudently * P. 93.
reserved to the last place) I might likewise shew
" how the principles of each science, arithmetick,
" geometry, logick, nature, morality, historical pru-
" dence, politicks, metaphysicks, divinity, and last
" of all the new science of controversy (as he calls it)
" or the blessed art of eternal wrangling and disput-
" ing (the first principle whereof (he tells us) is, that
" tradition is certain) do all contribute to shew the
" certainty of tradition," that is, the impossibility that any part of CHRIST's doctrine should fail in the Greek church any more than in the Latin. And surely arithmetick, geometry, logick, natural philosophy, metaphysicks, &c. will all stand up for the Greek church in this quarrel; for considering that Greece was the place where the arts and sciences were

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born and bred, it is not to be imagined that they ſhould be ſo diſingenuous and unnatural, as not to contribute their beſt aſſiſtance to the ſervice of their country.

§ 6. But it may be the Greeks cannot ſo juſtly pretend to oral trádition as the Latins. What if St. Peter, the head of the apoſtles, thought fit to ſhare ſcripture and tradition between theſe two churches, and laying his left hand on the Greek church, and his right on the Latin, was pleaſed to confer the great bleſſing of oral tradition upon the Latin church? which being to be the ſeat of infallibility, it was but fitting, that ſhe ſhould be furniſhed with this infallible way of conveying the chriſtian doctrine. And therefore it may be, that as the ſcriptures of the new teſtament were left in Greek, ſo oral tradition was delivered down only in Latin. This, I confeſs, is not altogether without ſome ſhew of reaſon: Mr. S. may do well to take the matter into his deeper conſideration; he hath in his time improved as weak probabilities as theſe into luſty demonſtrations. And if he could but demonſtrate this, it would very much weaken the force of this inſtance of the Greek church: otherwiſe (for ought I ſee) this inſtance will hold good againſt him; and whatever he can ſay for the impoſſibility of tradition's failing in the Latin church, may all be ſaid of the Greek church; if he will but grant that the apoſtles preached the ſame doctrine to them both; that the arguments of hope and fear which this doctrine contains in it, were applied as ſtrongly to the Greeks as to the Latins. And yet notwithſtanding all this, tradition hath plainly failed in the Greek church. Let him now aſſign the age wherein

wherein so vast a number of men conspired to leave out the article of the procession of the HOLY GHOST, and shew how it was possible a whole age could conspire together to damn their posterity, or how the faith of immediate forefathers might be altered without any such conspiracy, and we are ready to satisfy him how the doctrine of the Latin church might be corrupted and altered, and to tell him punctually in what age it was done. And until he do this, I would intreat him to trouble us no more with those canting questions (wherein yet the whole force of his demonstration lies). How is it possible a whole age should conspire to change the doctrine of their forefathers? And in what age was this done? For if it be reasonable to demand of us, in order to the overthrowing of his demonstration, to assign the particular age wherein the Latin church conspired to change the ancient doctrine; with the same reason we require of him, in order to the maintaining of his demonstration, to name the particular age wherein the Greek church conspired to alter the doctrine of CHRIST (which was undoubtedly in the first age truly delivered to them by the apostles) and also to shew from the rational force and strength of tradition, how it is more impossible for the whole church to have failed in transmitting the doctrine of CHRIST down to us, or to have conspired to the altering of it, than for such a multitude of christians as is the vast body of the Greek church. If Mr. S. or Mr. White shew this, they do something; otherwise, I must tell them, that unless they can manage these pretty things they call demonstrations better, they must shortly either quit their reason, or their religion; or else return to

SECT. V.

PART III. the honeſt old *mumpſimus* of the infallibility of the church from an extraordinary and immediate aſſiſtance of the HOLY GHOST: or (to make the buſineſs ſhort, and ſtop all gaps with one buſh) come over to the jeſuits, and acknowledge the pope's infallibility both in matters of faith and fact; by which means they may reconcile themſelves to him, and prevent that direful ſtroke which threatens them from Rome, and is ready to cut them off from the body of the traditionary church. And thus I have done with his firſt demonſtration: and I take it for a good ſign that the popiſh cauſe is at a very low ebb, when ſuch ſtuff as this muſt be called demonſtration.

SECT. VI.

Mr. S's demonſtration *à poſteriori*.

§ 1. I Come now to his demonſtration *à poſteriori*, which, although it fall of it ſelf if the demonſtration *à priori* fail, yet becauſe it hath ſome peculiar abſurdities of its own, I ſhall conſider it by it ſelf as well as with relation to the other.

§ 2. Before he comes to lay it down with the grounds of it, according to his uſual faſhion, he premiſeth ſomething as yielded by proteſtants, which, in his ſenſe, no proteſtant ever granted. Juſt ſo he dealt with us before concerning the ſcriptures, ſaying, "that by them the proteſtants muſt mean unſenſed "letters and characters." But let us ſee what it is.

* P. 76. "* That this demonſtration *à poſteriori*, ſeems a "needleſs endeavour againſt the proteſtants, who "yield that thoſe points in which we agree, as the "trinity, incarnation, &c. came down by this way "of tradition: and this (he ſaith) no proteſtant "ever

" ever denied." And then he asks, " whether the " ſame virtue of tradition would not have been as " powerful to bring down other points in which we " do not agree, had any ſuch been ?" Now if he ſpeak any thing to his own purpoſe, he muſt ſuppoſe proteſtants to yield that all thoſe points wherein we are agreed, were conveyed down to us ſolely by oral tradition without writing : but this all proteſtants deny. So that that only which would avail his cauſe againſt us, is to ſhew, that thoſe points wherein we differ, have not only come down to us by oral teaching, but that they are likewiſe contained in ſcripture, without which, we ſay, we can have no ſufficient certainty and aſſurance at this diſtance, that they were the doctrine of CHRIST, and that they were not either totally innovated, or elſe corrupted in the conveyance from what they were at firſt. And if he can ſhew this concerning any point in difference, I promiſe to yield it to him. SECT. VI.

§ 3. I come now to his demonſtration, which I ſhall ſet down in his own words with the principles upon which it relies. " * The effect then we will " pitch upon, and avow to be the proper one of ſuch " a cauſe, is the preſent perſuaſion of traditionary " chriſtians (or catholicks) that their faith hath de- " ſcended from CHRIST and his apoſtles uninterrup- " tedly, which we find moſt firmly rooted in their " heart ; and the exiſtence of this perſuaſion we af- " firm to be impoſſible without the exiſtence of tra- " dition's ever indeficiency to beget it. To prove " this, I lay this firſt principle, that age which " holds her faith thus delivered from the apoſtles, " neither can itſelf have changed any thing in it, nor " know

* P. 77, 78.

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" know or doubt that any age ſince the apoſtles " had changed or innovated therein. The ſecond " principle ſhall be this: no age could innovate " any thing, and withal deliver that very thing to " poſterity as received from CHRIST by continual " ſucceſſion." The ſum of which is this, that becauſe a preſent multitude of chriſtians (viz. the Roman church) are perſuaded, that CHRIST's doctrine hath deſcended to them ſolely by an uninterrupted oral tradition, therefore this perſuaſion is an effect which cannot be attributed to any other cauſe but the indeficiency of oral tradition. For if neither the preſent age, nor any age before, could make any change or innovation, then the perſuaſion of the preſent age is a plain demonſtration that this doctrine was always the ſame, and conſequently that tradition cannot fail.

§ 4. In anſwer to this, I ſhall endeavour to make good theſe four things.

Firſt, that theſe principles wholly rely upon the truth of the grounds of his demonſtration *à priori*.

Secondly, that theſe principles are not ſufficiently proved by him.

Thirdly, that doctrines and practices, which muſt be acknowledged to have been innovated, have made the ſame pretence to uninterrupted tradition.

Fourthly, that it is not the preſent perſuaſion of the church of Rome, (whom he calls the traditionary chriſtians) nor ever was, that their faith hath deſcended to them ſolely by oral tradition. If I can now make good theſe four things, I hope his demonſtration is at an end.

SECT.

SECT. VII..

§ 1. THAT these principles wholly rely upon the truth of the grounds of his demonstration *à priori*. For if the doctrine of CHRIST was either imperfectly taught in any age, or mistaken by the learners, or any part of it forgotten (as it seems the whole Greek church have forgot that fundamental point of the procession of the HOLY GHOST, as the Roman church accounts it) or if the arguments of hope and fear be not necessary causes of actual will to adhere to tradition, then there may have been changes and innovations in any age, and yet men may pretend to have followed tradition. But I have shewn, that ignorance, and negligence, and mistake, and pride, and lust, and ambition, and any other vice or interest, may hinder those causes from being effectual to preserve tradition entire and uncorrupted. And when they do so, it is not to be expected that those persons who innovate and change the doctrine, should acknowledge that their new doctrines are contrary to the doctrine of CHRIST; but that they should at first advance them as pious, and after they have prevailed and gained general entertainment, then impudently affirm that they were the very doctrines which CHRIST delivered; which they may very securely do, when they have it in their power to burn all that shall deny it. The first answer to his second demonstration.

§ 2. I will give a clear instance of the possibility of this in the doctrine of transubstantiation, by shewing how this might easily come in, in the ninth

or

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or tenth age after CHRIST. We will ſuppoſe then that about this time, when univerſal ignorance, and the genuine daughter of it (call her devotion or ſuperſtition) had overſpread the world, and the generality of people were ſtrongly inclined to believe ſtrange things; and even the greateſt contradictions were recommended to them under the notion of myſteries, being told by their prieſts and guides, that the more contradictious any thing is to reaſon, the greater merit there is in believing it: I ſay, let us ſuppoſe, that in this ſtate of things one or more of the moſt eminent then in the church, either out of deſign, or out of ſuperſtitious ignorance and miſtake of the ſenſe of our SAVIOUR's words uſed in the conſecration of the ſacrament, ſhould advance this new doctrine, that the words of conſecration, "this is my body," are not to be underſtood by any kind of trope (as the like forms in ſcripture are, "as I am the vine, I am the door," which are plain tropes) but being uſed about this great myſtery of the ſacrament ought in all reaſon to be ſuppoſed to contain in them ſome notable myſtery; which they will do, if they be underſtood of a real change of the ſubſtance of bread and wine, made by virtue of theſe words, into the real body and blood of our SAVIOUR; and in all this, I ſuppoſe nothing but what is ſo far from being impoſſible, that it is too uſual for men, either out of ignorance or intereſt, to advance new opinions in religion. And ſuch a doctrine as this was very likely to be advanced by the ambitious clergy of that time, as a probable means to draw in the people to a greater veneration of them; which advantage Mr. Ruſhworth *

* Dial. 1. ſect. 4.

ſeems

seems to be very sensible of, when he tells us, that the power of the priest in this particular "is "such a privilege, as if all the learned clerks that "ever lived since the beginning of the world should "have studied to raise, advance, and magnify some "one state of men to the highest pitch of reve- "rence and eminency, they could never (without "special light from heaven) have thought of any "thing comparable to this." I am of his mind, that it was a very notable device, but (I am apt to think) invented without any special light from heaven. Nor was such a doctrine less likely to take and prevail among the people in an age prodigiously ignorant, and strongly inclined to superstition, and thereby well prepared to receive the grossest absurdities under the notion of mysteries; especially if they were such as might seem to conciliate a greater honour and reverence to the sacrament. Now supposing such a doctrine as this, so fitted to the humour and temper of the age, to be once asserted, either by chance or out of design, it would take like wildfire; especially if by some one or more who bore sway in the church, it were but recommended with convenient gravity and solemnity. And although Mr. Rushworth says, "* it is "impossible that the authority of one man should "sway so much in the world, because (says he) "surely the devil himself would rather help the "church, than permit so little pride among men;" yet I am not so thoroughly satisfied with this cunning reason: for though he delivers it confidently, and with a surely, yet I make some doubt whether the devil would be so forward to help the church; nay,

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* Dial. 3. sect. 7.

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nay, on the contrary, I am inclined to think that he would rather chooſe to connive at this humble and obſequious temper in men, in order to the overthrow of religion, than croſs a deſign ſo dear to him by unſeaſonable temptations to pride: ſo that notwithſtanding Mr. Ruſhworth's reaſon, it ſeems very likely that ſuch a doctrine, in ſuch an age, might eaſily be propagated by the influence and authority of one or a few great perſons in the church. For nothing can be more ſuitable to the eaſy and paſſive temper of ſuperſtitious ignorance, than to entertain ſuch a doctrine with all imaginable greedineſs, and to maintain it with a proportionable zeal. And if there be any wiſer than the reſt, who make objections againſt it, as if this doctrine were new and full of contradictions, they may eaſily be born down by the ſtream, and by the eminency, and authority, and pretended ſanctity of thoſe who are the heads of this innovation. And when this doctrine is generally ſwallowed, and all that oppoſe it are looked upon and puniſhed as hereticks, then it is ſeaſonable to maintain that this doctrine was the doctrine of forefathers; to which end it will be ſufficient to thoſe who are willing to have it true, to bend two or three ſayings of the ancients to that purpoſe. And as for the contradictions contained in this doctrine, it was but telling the people then (as they do in effect now) that contradictions ought to be no ſcruple in the way of faith; that the more impoſſible any thing is, 'tis the fitter to be believed; that it is not praiſe-worthy to believe plain poſſibilities, but that this is the gallantry and heroical power of faith, this is the way to oblige God almighty

almighty for ever to us, to believe flat and down-right contradictions: "for GOD requires at the "people's hands (as Mr. Rushworth * tells us) a "credulity of things above and beyond nature; nay, "beyond all the fables, be it spoken with respect, "that ever man invented." After this doctrine had proceeded thus far, and by the most inhumane severities and cruelties suppress'd dissenters, or in a good measure rooted them out; then, if they please, even this new word transubstantiation may pretend also to antiquity, and in time be confidently vouched for a word used by christians in all ages, and transmitted down to them by those from whom they received the doctrine of the sacrament as a term of art appendant to it. And when a superstitious church and designing governors have once gained this post, and by means of this enormous article of transubstantiation have sufficiently debauched the minds of men, and made a breach in their understandings wide enough for the entertaining of any error, though ever so gross and senseless; then innovations come in amain, and by sholes; and the more absurd and unreasonable any thing is, it is for that very reason the more proper matter for an article of faith. And if any of these innovations be objected against, as contrary to former belief and practice, it is but putting forth a lusty act of faith and believing another contradiction, that though they be contrary, yet they are the same.

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* Dial. 1. sect. 4.

§ 3. And there is nothing in all this but what is agreeable both to history and experience. For that the ninth and tenth ages, and those which followed them till the reformation, were thus prodigiously igno-

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rant and ſuperſtitious, is confirmed by the unanimous conſent of all hiſtories; and even by thoſe writers, that have been the greateſt pillars of their own religion. And experience tells us, that in what age ſoever there are a great company of ſuperſtitious people, there will never be wanting a few crafty fellows to make uſe of this eaſy and pliable humour to their own ends. Now that this was the ſtate of thoſe ages of the church, will be evident to any from theſe teſtimonies. Platina * writes of pope Romanus, that he null'd the acts of his predeceſſor Stephanus: "for "(ſays he) theſe popes minded nothing elſe but how "they might extinguiſh both the name and dignity "of their predeceſſors." And if ſo, who can doubt but that theſe popes who made it their buſineſs to deſtroy the very memory of their anceſtors, would be very little careful to preſerve the doctrine of forefathers. But what the care of thoſe times was in this particular, may be conjectured from what Onuphrius * ſays by way of confutation of that paſſage in Platina, concerning pope Joan's reading publickly at Rome at her firſt coming thither. "This (ſays he) "is utterly falſe, for there was nothing that they were "leſs ſolicitous about in thoſe times, than to furniſh "the city with any publick teachers." And the time which Onuphrius ſpeaks of, was much about the beginning of the tenth century. Phil. Bargomenſis * ſays, "it happened in that age, through the ſloth-"fulneſs of men, that there was a general decay of "virtue both in the head and members." Again, "* theſe times, through the ambition and cruel tyran-"ny of the popes, were extremely unhappy—for the "popes ſetting aſide the fear of GOD and his wor-

ſhip,

* In vit. Romani papæ, 117. A.C. 900.

* In Platin.

* Anno 906.

* Anno 908.

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" ſhip, fell into ſuch enmities among themſelves as " cruel tyrants exerciſe towards one another." Sabellicus * ſays, " it is wonderful to obſerve what a " ſtrange forgetfulneſs of all arts did about this time " ſeize upon men; inſomuch that neither the popes, " nor other princes, ſeemed to have any ſenſe or apprehenſion of any thing that might be uſeful to " humane life. There were no wholſom laws, no " reparations of churches, no purſuit of liberal arts; " but a kind of ſtupidity and madneſs, and forgetfulneſs of manners had poſſeſſed the minds of men." And a little after, " I cannot (ſays he) but much wonder from whence theſe tragical examples of popes " ſhould ſpring; and how their minds ſhould come " to be ſo devoid of all piety, as neither to regard " the perſon which they ſuſtained, nor the place they " were in." Sigonius * ſpeaking of theſe times, about the beginning of the tenth century, calls them " the fouleſt and blackeſt, both in reſpect of " the wickedneſs of princes, and the madneſs of the " people that are to be found in all antiquity." Genebrard * ſpeaking of the ſame time: " this (ſays he) is called the unhappy age; being deſtitute of " men eminent for wit and learning, as alſo of famous princes and popes. In this time there was " ſcarce any thing done worthy to be remembred by " poſterity." And he adds afterwards, " but chiefly " unhappy in this one thing, that for almoſt an hundred and fifty years together, about fifty popes did " utterly degenerate from the virtue of their anceſtors." He ſhould have added farther, but even to a miracle happy in another reſpect, that during this long and total degeneracy from the piety and virtue of

* Ennead. 9. l. 1. anno 900.

* De reg. Ital. l. 6.

* Chron. l. 4.

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of their anceſtors, they did not in the leaſt ſwerve from them in matter of faith and doctrine: a thing incredible, were there not demonſtration for it. Werner * gives this character of that time; "about the "year of our LORD one thouſand there began an "effeminate time, in which the chriſtian faith be- "gan to degenerate exceedingly, and to decline from "its ancient vigour; inſomuch that in many coun- "tries of chriſtendom, neither ſacraments nor eccle- "ſiaſtical rites were obſerved—And people were gi- "ven to ſoothſaying and witchcraft, and the prieſt "was like the people." It ſeems by this teſtimony, that tradition did falter a little in that age, elſe the chriſtian faith could not poſſibly have degenerated and declined ſo very much: and (which threatens Mr. S's demonſtration moſt of all) "that the practi- "cal tradition of ſacraments, and other eccleſiaſtical "obſervances, did fail in many chriſtian countries." Gerbert *, who lived in that time, gives this ſhort character of the Roman church, in an epiſtle of his to Stephen, deacon of that church, "the world ſtands "amazed at the manners of Rome." But moſt full is the complaint of a great prelate of the church * concerning thoſe times; "in the weſt (ſays he) and al- "moſt all the world over (eſpecially among thoſe "who were called the faithful) faith failed, and there "was no fear of GOD among them: (it ſeems the ar- "gument of fear had loſt its force) juſtice was pe- "riſhed from among men, and violence prevailing "againſt equity governed the nations. Fraud, de- "ceit, and the arts of cozenage were grown univer- "ſal. All kind of virtue gave way as an uſeleſs "thing, and wickedneſs ſupplied its place. The "world

* Faſcic. tempor.

* Epiſt. 40.

* Bell. facr. l. 1. c. 8.

" world seemed to be declining apace towards its " evening, and the second coming of the son of man " to draw near: for love was grown cold, and faith " was not found upon earth. All things were in " confusion, and the world looked as if it would re- " turn to its old chaos.—All sorts of fornication " were committed with the same freedom as if " they had been lawful actions; for men neither " blushed at them, nor were punished for them. " —Nor did the clergy live better than the people. " —For the bishops were grown negligent of the " duty of their place, &c. In a word, men ran them- " selves headlong into all vice, and all flesh had cor- " rupted its way." And farther, to shew the great neglect of priests and bishops in the work of teaching and instructing (which is so necessary to the preserving of tradition inviolable) I will add the testimony of one * who lived in those times; who tells us, " that " in those days the priests and bishops, who ought to " have been the pillars of the church, were so negli- " gent that they did not mind the divine scripture; " nor take any care to teach and instruct scholars that " might succeed them, as we read holy men had used " to do, who left many scholars perfectly instructed " to be their successors." If they had only neglected the scriptures, all might have been well enough; but it seems they took no care to instruct people " in the way " of oral tradition, not to furnish the church with a new " generation of able teachers, who might deliver down " from hand to hand the sense and faith of forefathers." This last testimony the late learned lord primate of Ireland, bishop Usher (in his book *de christian. eccles. succ.* &c. * where several of the testimonies I have pro- duced, 3.

* Elfric. ferm. ad sacerdot.

* C. 2. &

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duced, with many more to the ſame purpoſe, may be ſeen) cites out of a MS. in Bennet college library in Cambridge; concerning the authority of which MS. there need be no diſpute between Mr. S. and me; becauſe the whole force and effect of this teſtimony is ſufficiently contained in thoſe citations which I have brought out of publick and unqueſtionable books.

§ 4. All theſe teſtimonies which I have produced are, in general and for the ſubſtance of them, confirmed by two of the greateſt props of the Romiſh church, Bellarmine and Baronius. Bellarmine * ſays of this tenth age, "that there was never any either "more unlearned or more unhappy. Baronius ſpeaks * more particularly; "what was then the face of the "Roman church? how deformed? when whores, "no leſs powerful than vile, bore the chief ſway at "Rome; and at their pleaſure changed ſees, ap-"pointed biſhops; and (which it is horrible to men-"tion) did thruſt into St. Peter's ſee their own gal-"lants, falſe popes, who would not have been men-"tioned in the catalogue of the Roman popes, but "only for the more diſtinct recording of ſo long a "ſucceſſion of times." And a little after, "CHRIST "was then (it ſeems) in a very deep ſleep—And "which was worſe; when the LORD was thus aſleep "there were no diſciples to awaken him, being them-"ſelves all faſt aſleep. What kind of cardinals, "presbyters, and deacons, can we think were choſen "by theſe monſters, when nothing is ſo natural as for "every one to propagate his own likeneſs?" It is very much that theſe lewd women, and their favourite popes, cardinals, and biſhops, who then ſwayed the church, ſhould, when they were ſo careleſs of their own

*De Rom. pontif. l. 4. c. 12.

* Annal. tom. 10. anno 900.

own ſouls, be ſo tender of the ſalvation of poſterity; and when they adminiſtred all other affairs of the church ſo extravagantly, ſhould be ſo careful of the main chance, as to tranſmit the chriſtian doctrine entire and uncorrupted to ſucceeding ages. Yet Mr. S. hath demonſtrated this *à poſteriori*, which ſeems ſo very ſtrange to a man that conſiders things *à priori*. SECT. VII.

§ 5. But it may be this diſmal ſtate of the Roman church laſted but a little while; and ſhe did in the ſame age, before tradition could be interrupted, recover herſelf out of this degenerate condition. I will therefore enquire a little into the ſtate of ſucceeding times. And I find in the thirteenth century, St. Bernard * complaining, that the degeneracy of the prieſts was in his days greater than ever; "we "cannot (ſays he) now ſay, as is the people ſo is "the prieſt; for the people are not ſo bad as their "prieſts." In the fifteenth century, Nic. de Clemangiis, who lived in that time, wrote a book upon this argument, "of the corrupt ſtate of the church;" by which we may make ſome judgment whether in that age it was (as Mr. S. ſays) impoſſible but that the chriſtian doctrine ſhould be entirely preſerved, and faithfully and diligently taught. He ſays, "* there was an univerſal degeneracy in the church, "from the very head of it to its loweſt members." In the ſame chapter he complains, "who is there "that preaches the goſpel to the people? who "ſhews them the way to ſalvation either by word "or action?" It ſeems there was a great failure both of oral and practical tradition. Again *, ſpeaking of the pope's taking to himſelf the collation of all vacant biſhopricks and dignities; he ſays, one

* In conſerſ. ſancti Pauli. ſerm. 1.

* C. 3

* C. 5.

5.

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might think the pope did this, " that the church " might be provided of worthier governors, both " in reſpect of their learning, and their lives, did " not the thing itſelf declare the contrary, and that " ignorant and uſeleſs perſons (provided they had " money) were by ſimony advanced to the higheſt
* C. 6. " degrees in the church." And * ſpeaking what a vaſt number of candidates there was uſually at Rome from all parts waiting for benefices and dignities, he tells us, " that many of theſe did not come from " their ſtudies, or from ſchools of learning, to go- " vern pariſhes; but from the plow, and from the " meaneſt profeſſions: and that they underſtood " Latin and Arabick much at the ſame rate; and " many of them could not read at all. But it may " be (ſays he) their manners were ſuch as might be " ſome excuſe for their ignorance. No; though " their learning was but little, their virtue was leſs; " for being brought up in idleneſs, they followed " nothing but debauchery and ſports, &c. Hence " it comes to paſs, that in all places there are ſo " many wicked, and wretched, and ignorant prieſts— " Hence it is that prieſts are ſo contemned by " the common people.—Formerly the prieſthood " was highly honoured by the people, and nothing " was more venerable than that order of men; but
* C. 9. " now nothing is more vile and deſpicable.— * I " make no doubt, but there are now more thieves " and robbers, than true paſtors in the church.
* C. 11. " —* Why ſhould any man now flatter himſelf " with hopes of preferment, becauſe of his virtue " or learning? Men do not now (as formerly)
* C. 13. " riſe in the church by ſuch arts ——* Which of " thoſe

" thoſe that are now-a-days advanced to the pontifical SECT. VII.
" dignity, hath ſo much as perfunctorily read, or
" heard, or learnt the ſcriptures; yea, or ever
" touched any more than the cover of the bible?"
Again, * ſpeaking of the prodigious covetouſneſs of * C. 14.
the governors of the church, and the groſs neglect
of their flocks, " they would (ſays he) much more
" contentedly bear the loſs of ten thouſand ſouls,
" than of ten or twelve ſhillings. But why do
" I ſay more contentedly? when without the
" leaſt trouble or diſturbance to themſelves, they
" can bear the loſs of ſouls; a thing ſo far from
" their care, that it never enter'd into their thoughts."
Had the hereticks of thoſe days but had wit enough,
and a little money, they might (it ſeems) for a
ſmall ſum have hired the governors of the church to
have renounced tradition, or to have ceaſed to pro-
pagate it; though they had known that in ſo doing
they ſhould have damned all their poſterity. He
goes on, and tells us, " that if there were perhaps
" any one who did not take theſe courſes, the reſt
" would ſnarl at him, call him fool, and ſay
" he was unfit to be a prieſt. — So that the ſtudy
" of the ſcriptures (together with the profeſſors of
" it) was turned into laughter and ſcorn by all; but
" (which is prodigious) eſpecially by the popes,
" who prefer their own tradition many degrees be-
" fore the commands of GOD." I deſire Mr. S.
to take notice in what kind of times tradition was
ſet up againſt ſcripture. Again, * ſpeaking of the * C. 16.
choice of perſons to be prieſts, he tells us, " that
" there was no enquiry made into their lives,
" no queſtion about their manners. As for their

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"learning (says he) what need I speak of that? "when we see the priests, almost universally, have "much ado to read, though but in an hesitating "and spelling fashion, drawing out one syllable af- "ter another, without understanding either the "sense of what they read, or the words." I am now reconciled to oral tradition, and convinced that there was great need of it in those ages in which scarce any of the priests could either write or read.

* C. 20, 21, 23. I omit the particulars of what he says, "* con- "cerning the common drunkenness and incon- "tinency of priests, who (because they made con- "science of marriage) kept whores in their houses; "concerning the dissolute lives of monks; and con- "cerning nunneries, which instead of being the "sanctuaries of GOD, were the abominable stews "of Venus, and the receptacles of lascivious young "men;" insomuch (says he) "that at this day "it is the same thing to put a virgin into a nunnery, "and to make her a common strumpet." And to shew that he does not speak these things of a few, but with relation to the general corruption of that age,

* C. 27. he adds, "* that wickedness did so abound in all "orders of men, that scarce one among a thou- "sand was to be found who did truly live up to his "profession: and if there was any one that did not "follow these lewd courses, he became ridiculous to "others, and was branded either as an insolent sin- "gular madman, or an hypocrite." I will con- clude this long testimony with the character which

* C. 26. he gives * of one of the popes of his time, Clement by name, viz. "That he did chiefly apply himself "to gratify and oblige all the parasites and buf-

foons

" foons that had any intereſt in the ſeveral courts SECT. VII.
" of princes: and to this end, did confer upon theſe,
" and upon handſom young boys (which he much
" delighted in) almoſt all the vacant biſhopricks, and
" moſt of the other church dignities." It is well that oral tradition hath the ſecurity of infallibility, otherwiſe it had in all probability been loſt among this lewd ſort of people, which yet they gravely call the holy roman catholick church.

§ 6. To this effect I might have produced teſtimonies concerning every age from the ninth to the ſixteenth; but Mr. Creſſy hath ſaved me that labour, who acknowledges, " * that theſe worſt * Exomo-
" times of the church, when ignorance, worldlineſs, log. c. 65.
" pride, tyranny, &c. reigned with ſo much ſcope;
" when the popes (ſo wicked, ſo abominable in their
" lives) enjoyed ſo unlimited a power even over ſe-
" cular princes themſelves, and much more over the
" clergy:" I ſay, he acknowledges that theſe worſt times continued during the ſpace of about ſix ages before Luther: a competent time (one would think) for tradition to have miſcarried in, were it not (as Mr. S. ſays) indefectible. Mr. Creſſy indeed tells us, " * that this was to him an irrefragable teſtimo- * Ibid.
" ny of a ſtrange watchfulneſs of divine provi-
" dence over the church, to preſerve it from the
" gates of hell (that is, eſtabliſhed and dangerous
" errors) during theſe worſt times." And very likely it is that this might appear ſo to ſuch a catholick, " whoſe judgment, he tells us, it is to
" renounce his own judgment:" but it will never appear irrefragable to any man that hath his judgment about him, unleſs Mr. Creſſy can prove, that

by

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by that phraſe, viz. the gates of hell, the ſcripture does not mean groſs wickedneſs of life, as well as dangerous errors in opinion; and likewiſe, that a general viciouſneſs and debauchery of manners is not as pernicious to chriſtianity, and as deſtructive to the end of it, as eſtabliſhed errors in doctrine. And if ſo, that the providence of GOD is not equally concerned to preſerve the church from things equally pernicious. When he hath proved theſe three things, then this declamatory diſcourſe of his may ſignify ſomething, but not before.

§ 7. Now if this be a true repreſentation of the ſtate of the Roman church in thoſe ages, was not this a very fit time for the devil to play his pranks in? Will any man that reads thoſe teſtimonies, think it impoſſible that the doctrine of CHRIST ſhould have been depraved in this age; or that the moſt ſenſeleſs and abſurd tenets might then be brought in under the notion of chriſtian doctrines? when ſcarce any one knew what the doctrine of CHRIST was: when a general ignorance of letters, and almoſt an univerſal ſtupidity and madneſs had ſeized upon the minds of men: when there was a horrid depravation of manners, and a general failure of virtue and piety both in the head and members of the church: when the lives of the popes were tragically wicked, and no footſteps of piety appeared in them: when for about 150 years together, in a continued ſucceſſion of 50 popes, there was ſcarce one pious and virtuous man (or woman) ſate in that chair: when the whores governed Rome, and put out, and put in biſhops at their pleaſure; and made their own gallants popes, who would be ſure to make

make a college of cardinals of such monsters as themselves: when pretty boys, and parasites, and buffoons, led the head of the church by the nose, and were gratified with the best bishopricks and dignities in the church: when there was a general decay of knowledge, and defection of the christian faith, when in many countries neither sacraments, nor other ecclesiastical rites were observed: when violence and fraud, and all the arts of deceit and cozenage, and blacker arts than these, were the common study and practice: when intemperance, and all kind of lewdness and debauchery, reigned in all sorts and orders of men: when the generality of bishops and priests (who, according to Mr. Rushworth *, can only teach the traditionary doctrine) were ignorant in the scriptures, and in every thing else (very few of them being able so much as to read tolerably) and did neglect to teach the people, and to breed up any in knowledge to succeed them in their office; and in the lewdness of their lives did surpass the vilest of the people: was not such an age a fit season to plant the doctrine of transubstantiation in? Or if any thing more monstrous than that can be imagined, it might then have taken place; for what weeds would not have grown in so rank a soil? Doth Mr. S. think it impossible, that those that were born in the church then should be ignorant of the doctrine of CHRIST, when scarce any one would take the pains to teach it them; or that it could then have been altered, when so few understood and fewer practised it? when prodigious impiety and wickedness did overspread the church from the pope down to the meanest

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* Dial. 3. sect. 3.

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meaneſt of the laity, can any one believe that men generally made conſcience to inſtruct their children in the true faith of CHRIST? Was it impoſſible there ſhould be any neglect of this duty, when all others failed? That there ſhould be any miſtake about the doctrine of CHRIST, when there was ſo much ignorance: unleſs he be of Mr. Ruſhworth's * mind, "who reckons ignorance among the parents of religion." Where were then the arguments of hope and fear? were they ſtrongly applied, or were they not? were they cauſes of actual will in chriſtians to believe well when they lived ſo ill? or is chriſtianity only fitted to form mens minds to a right belief, but of no efficacy to govern their lives? Hath CHRIST taken care to keep his church from error, but not from vice? as the great cardinal Perron * (ſtooping below his own wit and reaſon to ſerve a bad cauſe) tells us, "that the church ſings, and will ſing to the end of "the world, I am black, but I am fair; that is to "ſay, I am black in manners, but fair in doctrine." As if the meaning of the propheſies and promiſes of the ſcripture made to the church were this, that by the extraordinary care of GOD's providence, and peculiar aſſiſtance of his HOLY SPIRIT, ſhe ſhould be wicked, but orthodox to the end of the world. Where were then the vigorous cauſes imprinting CHRIST's doctrine, and continuing it more particularly at Rome than any where elſe; and of ſecuring that ſee and its ſupreme paſtor in the faith and practice of the chriſtian doctrine, above any other ſee or paſtor whatſoever? Who is ſo little verſed in hiſtory, as not to underſtand the diſmal ſtate of religion in the Romiſh church in thoſe times? Who does not know

* Dial. 3. ſect. 7.

* Reply to K. James, l. 4. c. 6.

know what advantages the biſhops of Rome and their ſervile clergy, made of the ignorance and ſuperſtition of thoſe and the ſucceeding ages; and by what arts and ſteps they raiſed themſelves to that power which they held in the church for a long while after? when they could tread upon the necks of princes, and make a great king walk bare-foot, and yield himſelf to be ſcourged by a company of petulant monks: when they could ſend any man upon an errand to viſit the holy ſepulchre, or the ſhrine of ſuch a ſaint; and command five or ſix kings with great armies upon a needleſs expedition into the holy land, that ſo during their abſence they might play their own game the better: when they could mint miracles, and impoſe upon the belief of the people (without the authority of any ancient books) abſurd and counterfeit tales of ancient ſaints and martyrs, as delivered down to them by tradition; and could bring that foppiſh book the legend, almoſt into equal authority and veneration with the bible; and perſuade the eaſy people that St. Denys carried his own head in his hand, after it was cut off, two miles, and kiſs'd it when he laid it down. Any one that ſhall but reflect upon the monſtrous practices of the Roman biſhops and clergy in theſe ages, the ſtrange feats they play'd, and what abſurdities they impoſed upon the ſuperſtitious credulity of princes and people, may readily imagine not only the poſſibility, but the eaſineſs of innovating new doctrines as they pleaſed, under the ſpecious pretences of antiquity, and conſtant and uninterrupted tradition. SECT. VII.

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§ 8. And this kind of discourse concerning the possibility of errors coming into the church, is not, as Mr. White ridiculously compares it, " * as if an " orator should go about to persuade people, that " George, by the help of a long staff, and a nim- " ble cast of his body, and such like advantages, " might leap over Paul's steeple; never consider- " ing all the while the disproportion of all these " advantages to the height of the steeple: so (saith " he) he that discourseth at large how errors use " to slid into man's life, without comparing the " power of the causes of error to the strength of " resisting, which consists in this principle, nothing " is to be admitted but what descends by tradi- " tion, &c. says no more towards proving an er- " ror's over-running the church, than the orator " for George's leaping over the steeple." How vain is this? when it appears from this instance that I have given of the state of the Roman church, in the ninth and tenth centuries, and afterwards, that the causes of error were infinitely stronger than the power of resistance. The great causes of error are ignorance and vice; where ignorance reigns, there's no power: where vice, no will to resist it. And how great the ignorance and viciousness of all orders of men in the Roman church was, is too apparent from the testimonies I have brought. Where was the strength of resisting error, when for 150 years together the popes were the vilest of men, bishops and priests overwhelmed with ignorance, abandoned to all manner of vice, and most supinely negligent in instructing the people? in such a degenerate state of a church, what strength is there in

* Apology for tradition, p. 49.

in this principle, " nothing is to be admitted but " what deſcends by tradition ? " when thoſe, who ought to teach men what that doctrine is which was derived to them by tradition, are generally careleſs of their duty, and ignorant themſelves what that doctrine is; when they addict themſelves wholly to the ſatisfying of their ambition, and other luſts, and carrying on deſigns of gain, and getting dominion over the people; what can hinder men ſo diſpoſed from corrupting the doctrine of CHRIST, and ſuiting it to their own luſts and intereſts ? and what ſhall hinder the people from embracing thoſe corruptions; when by the negligence of their paſtors to inſtruct them, and not only ſo, but alſo by their being deprived of the ſcriptures in a known tongue, they are become utterly incapable of knowing what the true doctrine of CHRIST is ? ſo that in an age of ſuch profound ignorance and vice, and general neglect of inſtruction, 'tis ſo far from being impoſſible for errors to over-run a church, that the contrary is morally impoſſible; and George's long ſtaff and advantageous caſt of his body, are more powerful cauſes to enable him to leap over Paul's ſteeple, than this principle, " that " nothing is to be admitted, but what deſcends by " tradition," is to keep errors out of a church in an ignorant and vicious age; when few or none are either able or willing to inſtruct men in the truth. For ſuppoſe this always to have been the principle of chriſtians, viz. " that nothing is to be admit- " ted as the doctrine of CHRIST, but what is de- " ſcended to them by tradition : " how ſhall this principle ſecure the church from hereſy, any more

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than this, viz. " that nothing but truth is to be " assented to," doth secure men from error? or more than this, viz. " that no man is to do any thing " but what is wise and virtuous," does secure the generality of mankind from folly and vice?

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The second answer to his second demonstration.

§ 1. SEcondly, the principles upon which this demonstration relies, are not sufficiently proved by him.

His first principle is this, " that age, which holds " her faith delivered thus from the apostles, neither can it self have changed any thing in it, nor " know or doubt that any age since the apostles " had changed or innovated any thing therein. " This proposition (he tells us) needs no proof " to evidence it, but only an explication: for " since no man can hold contrary to his knowledge, or doubt of what he holds, nor change or " innovate in the case proposed, without knowing " he did so; 'tis a manifest impossibility a whole " age should fall into an absurdity so inconsistent " with the nature of one single man." But (by his favour) that which he says is no proof, but only an explication, is a proof if it be any thing; and the force of it is this: " that which is inconsistent " with the nature of one single man, is manifestly " impossible to a whole age; but it is inconsistent " with the nature of any single man to hold contrary to his knowledge, *&c.* therefore impossible " to a whole age; and consequently, that age which " holds her faith delivered thus from the apostles, " neither

" neither can it self have changed any thing, SECT.
" nor, *&c.*" so that in order to the making good VIII.
of this first principle, Mr. S. hath left nothing unproved but only this proposition, namely, that it is impossible that any one single man that holds his faith to have been delivered uninterruptedly from the apostles, should either himself have changed any thing in it, or know or doubt that any age since the apostles hath changed or innovated any thing therein: and to make out the truth of this proposition, there only remains this to be proved, viz. that it is impossible for any single man to be mistaken: for if that be possible, then contrary to Mr. S. a man may hold that to have been delivered as a doctrine of faith from the apostles which was not so delivered.

§ 2. His second principle is this, " that no age " could innovate any thing, and withal deliver that " very thing to posterity as received from CHRIST " by continual succession." He proves it thus; " since man is a rational creature, he must have " some reason or motive good or bad, which he " proposeth to himself as an end to be atchieved " by his action: and whatever his remote end is, " his immediate end, in telling posterity a late " invented thing was held immediately before, is " to make them believe it. Wherefore since a seen " impossibility cannot be a motive to one not " frantick: and since 'tis evidently impossible they " should make posterity believe a thing so univer- " sally known to be false, as this must needs " be, *&c.* it is as impossible this principle should " falter, as that the foregoing age should conspire

" to

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" to act without a motive, or that the succeeding " age should believe what they know to be other- " wise, that is, should hold both sides of a contra- " diction in a clear matter of fact." The force of which is this, that it is impossible that any man not frantick should attempt to innovate in matter of christian doctrine, because the immediate end of such an attempt must be to have his new doctrine believed; but it is impossible he should attain this end, and impossible he should not see that it is impossible to attain it: now a seen impossibility is an end that cannot move any one that is not frantick; therefore no man that is not frantick, can attempt to innovate in matter of christian doctrine. Thus he hath demonstrated it impossible that there should be any hereticks, if a heretick be one that attempts to innovate in matter of christian doctrine: for if there be any such attempters they must be frantick, and if they be frantick they can be no hereticks; for heresy implies a crime, but GOD will not impute the actions of mad men to them as faults. Again, suppose he that attempts to innovate be mistaken (and I hope Mr. S. will grant that a heretick is fallible) and think that which he delivers as CHRIST's doctrine to be really so, though indeed it be not; why should such a person think it impossible to make men believe that to be received from CHRIST which he really thinks was received, and thinks he can make it appear that it was so? and if this be granted, then it is not impossible that man, though he be a rational creature, may attempt to innovate. And if so, then his second principle is not proved.

If

If Mr. S. had any regard to the noble ſcience of controverſy (whereof he pretends to be ſo great a maſter) he would not bring ſuch trifling ſophiſms inſtead of demonſtrative proofs: and nothing leſs than a demonſtrative proof will ſerve to eſtabliſh any principle upon which a demonſtration is to be built. SECT. IX.

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§ 1. DOctrines and practices which muſt be acknowledged to have been innovated, have made the ſame pretence to uninterrupted tradition. And of this I ſhall give ſeveral inſtances; one among the jews, the reſt among chriſtians. The third anſwer to Mr. S's ſecond demonſtration.

1. I ſhall inſtance among the traditionary jews, whoſe perſuaſion in our SAVIOUR's time was, and ſtill is, that their oral doctrine, which they call their cabala, hath deſcended to them from Moſes uninterruptedly. Now here is the exiſtence of ſuch a perſuaſion, as Mr. S. affirms to be "impoſſible without "tradition's ever-indeficiency to beget it. And this perſuaſion of theirs is moſt exactly parallel with the pretenſions of the Romiſh church according to Mr. S. For here's a multitude of traditionary jews, manifoldly greater in proportion to the diſſenters in that church, than the Romiſh church is in compariſon to thoſe chriſtians that diſſent from her. Joſephus tells us *, "that "the richer ſort were of the perſuaſion of the ſad-"ducees, but the multitude were on the phariſees "ſide." So that the phariſees had this mark of the true church (as Bellarmine calls it) common to them with the church of Rome, that they were the greateſt number, and ſo they continue to this very day; inſomuch that although they do not call themſelves the catho-

* Antiq. Jud. l. 13. c. 18.

licks,

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licks, yet I am ſure they call all jews that do diſſent from them ſchiſmaticks. Now that the ſadducees were for the written law againſt oral tradition, is, I confeſs, no credit to us; but that our SAVIOUR reproved the traditionary doctrines and practices of the phariſees, becauſe by them they made void the written law, is much more to the diſcredit of the aſſertors of oral tradition. Both romaniſts and phariſees own alike a written doctrine, but then they both pretend the true ſenſe and explication thereof to have deſcended to them by oral tradition. For juſt as the traditionary chriſtians do now, ſo Joſephus tells * us the traditionary jews of old, the phariſees, did pretend by their oral tradition to interpret the law more accurately and exactly than any other ſect. In like manner he † tells us, "that all things, that belonged "to prayer and divine worſhip, were regulated and "adminiſtred according to their interpretations of "the law." And they both agree in this, to make void the word of GOD by their tradition; which the phariſees did no otherwiſe than Mr. S. does, by equalling oral tradition to ſcripture; nay preferring it above ſcripture, in making it the ſole rule of faith, and interpreting the ſcripture according to it. Hence are thoſe common ſayings in the talmud, and other jewiſh books: "do not think that the written law is the "foundation, but that the law orally delivered is the "right foundation;" which is to ſay with Mr. S. "that not the ſcripture, but oral tradition is the "true rule of faith." Again, "there is more in "the words of the ſcribes (viz. the teſtifiers of tra-"dition) than in the words of the written law." Again, "the oral law excels the written, as much as "the

* Ibid. l. 17. c. 3. & de bell. Jud. l. 1. c. 4. & l. 2. c. 12.

† Antiq. l. 18.

" the ſoul doth the body ;" which accords very well with what Mr. S. frequently tells us, that the ſcripture without tradition is but a dead letter, deſtitute of life and ſenſe. Hence alſo it is that they required the people (as the traditionary church does now) to yield up themſelves to the dictates of tradition even in the moſt abſurd things, as appears by that common ſaying among them, " if the ſcribes ſay that the right " hand is the left, and the left the right (that bread " is fleſh, and wine is blood) hearken to them, " that is, make no ſcruple of whatſoever they deliver as tradition, though never ſo contrary to reaſon or ſenſe. And laſtly, the doctrines of the phariſees were many of them practical ; ſuch were all thoſe which concerned external rites and obſervances, as waſhing of hands and cups, &c. ſo that theſe phariſaical traditions had alſo that unſpeakable advantage which Mr. S. ſays renders their traditions unmiſtakeable, " that " they were daily practiſed, and came down clad in " ſuch plain matters of fact, that the moſt ſtupid " man living could not poſſibly be ignorant of " them." Therefore, according to Mr. S's principles, it was impoſſible that any age of the jews ſhould be perſuaded that theſe things were commanded by Moſes, and ever ſince obſerved, if they had not been ſo : and yet our SAVIOUR denies theſe cuſtoms to have been of any ſuch authority as they pretended. SECT. IX.

§ 2. But I needed not to have taken all this pains to ſhew the agreement which is between the traditionary jews and papiſts, their own writers ſo liberally acknowledging it. Mr. White * indeed ſays, " that " the faith of the jews was not delivered to them " orally

* De fid. & theol. tract. 1. ſect. 6.

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" orally, but by writing;" than which nothing can be more inconſiſtent with his hypotheſis. For if the jewiſh faith was conveyed to them not orally but by writing, then either the jewiſh church had no ſufficient rule of faith, or elſe a writing may be ſuch a rule. But other of their champions make great uſe of the parallel, between the traditionary jews and the romiſh church, to confirm from thence their own traditionary doctrines. Cardinal Perron hath a full paſ-

* Rep. to K. James, obſerv. 3. c. 4.

ſage to this purpoſe: " as this (ſays he *) is to preſerve " a ſound and entire reſpect to the majeſty of the an- " cient moſaick ſcripture, to believe and obſerve not " only all the things which are therein actually con- " tained, but alſo thoſe things which are therein con- " tained mediately and relatively, as the doctrines of " paradiſe, &c. which were not contained therein but " mediately, and by the authority which it gave to " the depoſition of the patriarchal and moſaick tradi- " tion, preſerved by heart, and in the oral doctrine " of the ſynagogue: ſo this is to preſerve a ſound and " entire reſpect to the majeſty of the apoſtolical ſcrip- " ture, to believe and obſerve all the things which it " contains, not only immediately and by itſelf, but " mediately and by reference to the apoſtolical tra- " ditions, to which in groſs and generally it gives " the authority of apoſtolical doctrines, and to the " church the authority of guardian and depoſitary to " preſerve and atteſt them." Voyſin, in his obſerva-

* Pugio fid. p. 145.

tions upon Raymundus Martin, * tells us, " that as " in the old law the great conſiſtory at Jeruſalem was " the foundation of the true tradition, ſo (ſays he) " the ſee of Rome is the foundation of our tradi- " tion. And as the continual ſucceſſion of the high

" prieſts

" prieſts and fathers among the jews was the great " confirmation of the truth of their traditions, ſo " (ſays he) with us the truth of our catholick doc- " trine is confirmed by a continual ſucceſſion of " popes."

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§ 3. From all this it appears, that the phariſees among the jews made the ſame pretence to oral tradition which the papiſts do at this day according to Mr. S. And if ſo, then Mr. S's demonſtration *à poſteriori* is every whit as ſtrong for the jews againſt our SAVIOUR, as it is for the papiſts againſt the proteſtants. For we find that in our SAVIOUR's time, it was then the preſent perſuaſion of the traditionary jews, that their faith, and their rites, and the true ſenſe and interpretation of their written law was deſcended from Moſes and the prophets to them uninterruptedly; which we find was moſt firmly rooted in their hearts. But the jews had conſtant tradition among them, that the MESSIAH was to be a great temporal prince: and though the letters of the propheſies concerning him, might well enough have been accommodated to the low and ſuffering condition of our SAVIOUR; yet they did infallibly know that their MESSIAH was to be another kind of perſon, from ſenſe written in their hearts, from the interpretation of thoſe propheſies orally brought down to them from the patriarchal and moſaick tradition preſerved by heart, and in the oral doctrine of the ſynagogue, and from the living voice of their church eſſential, that is, the univerſal conſent of the then traditionary jews. If it be ſaid, that the jewiſh tradition did indeed bring down ſeveral doctrines not contained in ſcripture, of paradiſe, of hell, of the laſt

PART III. judgment, of the resurrection, &c. (as cardinal Perron affirms) but it did not bring down this point of the MESSIAH's being a temporal prince: then as Mr. S. * asks us, so the jew does him; "by what virtue "tradition brought down those other points? and "whether the same virtue were not powerful to bring "down this as well as those?" Then he will ask him farther, "is there not a necessary connexion and "relation between a constant cause and its formal ef-"fect? so that if its formal effect be points received "as delivered ever, the proper cause must be an ever-"delivery; whence he will argue from such an ef-"fect to its cause for any particular point, and con-"sequently for this point that is in controversy be-"tween jews and christians, concerning the MES-"SIAH's being a temporal prince, in case it be a "point held ever delivered;" but most certain it is, it was so held by the jews in our SAVIOUR's time, and hath been held so ever since to this day.

* P 76.

I shall not trouble the reader with transcribing the rest of this demonstration, only desire him as he reads it over, to imagine instead of Mr. S. a pharisee demonstrating against one of CHRIST's disciples, the infallibility of the oral tradition of the jews: and I doubt not but he will find this demonstration, and every part of it (changing only the names) as forcibly concluding CHRIST not to be the MESSIAH, as it doth infer any point of popery against the protestants.

§ 4. Before I leave this instance of the jewish tradition, I shall briefly consider what Mr. White * hath offered by way of answer to it; as first, "that the "matter of these traditions is nothing else but expli-

* Apol. 123, &c.

"cations

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" cations of ſcripture framed and invented by their " own rabbins," So we ſay, that the popiſh traditions are innovations. But then Mr. White and Mr. S. tell us, that they can demonſtrate them to be deſcended from CHRIST and his apoſtles, becauſe it is the preſent perſuaſion of a multitude of chriſtians that they are ſo deſcended. In like manner, if this demonſtration be good, the jews can prove their traditions to be deſcended from Moſes and the prophets. Secondly, he ſays, " that the form of theſe traditions " is more ridiculous than the canting of gypſies, or " the juggling of hocus-pocus, becauſe it conſiſts in " inventing the ſenſe of the ſcripture from the myſte- " ries, and numbers, and changes of letters." This is a groſs inexcuſable miſtake. For though the jews have ſuch a cabala (call'd Gematry) as this which Mr. White deſcribes; yet that cabala which is argued in this inſtance, and which our SAVIOUR reproves in the Phariſees by the name of tradition, is quite another thing, and among the jewiſh writers known by the name of the unwritten or oral law; which they ſay was delivered to Moſes on mount Sinai, and by him conveyed to Aaron and Joſhua, and the elders, and ſucceſſively delivered down from one age to another; and at laſt by Rabbi Jehudah compiled into one volume which they call miſhna, or δευτέρωσις. And this does not conſiſt in the art of numbring, combining, or changing of letters, as Mr. White imagines. But ſuppoſe it did ſo, and were more ridiculous than he conceits it to be; the inſtance would be ſo much the more concluſive againſt them, if what they affirm be true, " that oral tradition is infallible, and that the per-

" ſuaſion

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" ſuaſion of a traditionary church in any age, that " ſuch a doctrine deſcended to them from CHRIST " or Moſes, be a demonſtration that it did ſo:" for if this be ſufficient evidence it is nothing to the purpoſe what the doctrine be either for matter or form: for if it be once demonſtrated to have come from CHRIST or Moſes, it is without any farther diſpute to be received as of divine authority. So that Mr. White quite alters the ſtate of the queſtion; which was not whether the jewiſh cabala be abſurd and ridiculous, but whether the general perſuaſion of the jews in any age, that it deſcended to them by uninterrupted tradition from Moſes, be a demonſtration that it did ſo. If it be, then the jewiſh cabala is as demonſtratively of divine authority as the oral doctrine of the papiſts. Thirdly, he ſays, " this cabala was a doctrine delivered to few, and " that with ſtrict charge to keep it from publicity, " and ſo communicate it again ſucceſſively to a ſe- " lect committee of a few; wherein (ſays he) you " may ſee as fair an opportunity for juggling and " cozenage, as in our caſe there is an impoſſibility." This I think is true of the cabala, which (it ſeems) Mr. White had only in his view, but is a horrible miſtake if he ſpeaks of the oral law which was contained in the miſhna, and which this inſtance only intends. For of this Maimonides * ſays expreſly, " that in every age, from the time of Moſes to " Rabbi Jehudah, who compiled the miſhna, the " oral law was publickly taught: and that after " Rabbi Jehudah had compiled it into one volume, " the Iſraelites did generally write out copies of it, " and it was every where carefully taught, for fear " leſt

* In præfat. ſum. talmud.

" leſt the oral law ſhould by forgetfulneſs be loſt SECT. IX.
" among the jews." So that upon account of the publickneſs of the doctrine, there is as great an impoſſibility of juggling and cozenage in the caſe of the jewiſh as of the romiſh tradition. Beſides, was waſhing of hands and cups, which they alſo pretended to have come down to them from Moſes, and to have been conſtantly practiſed in every age, a ſecret thing? was it not a practical tradition, and performed in a ſenſible matter? If therefore no age can conſpire to impoſe upon the next in a plain cuſtom; and if an univerſal tradition of ſuch a thing cannot come in without ſuch a conſpiracy: how could this be the perſuaſion of any age, that waſhing of hands, &c. was preſcribed by Moſes and practiſed in all ages, if it had not truly been ſo?

§ 5. Secondly, as for inſtances among chriſtians, whereof many remain yet upon record; as namely, the various and oppoſite traditions about the time of eaſter, and concerning the baptiſm of hereticks; and the apoſtolical tradition (as St. Auſtin calls it) concerning the admiſſion of infants to the communion; all which have been frequently urged in this controverſy, and none of them yet ſufficiently anſwered; I ſhall, to avoid tedioufneſs, paſſing by theſe, inſiſt only upon that of the chiliaſts; which in Juſtin Martyr's time, was the perſuaſion of all orthodox chriſtians, that is (in Mr. S's dialect) of all the holders to tradition. For if notwithſtanding the perſuaſion of that age, that this doctrine was deſcended to them from the apoſtles, it was not really ſo deſcended; then the perſuaſion of chriſtians

in

PART III. in any age, that a doctrine was brought down to them from the apoſtles, is no demonſtration that it was ſo.

* Apol. p. 78, 79, &c.

§ 6. To this inſtance Mr. White anſwers * by telling us, "that Euſebius ſays that this tradition "ſprang from Papias" (a good but a credulous and ſimple man) who it ſeems was miſtaken in ſaying that it was the apoſtles doctrine. But for all this Juſtin Martyr ſays it was received by all orthodox chriſtians in his time, as a doctrine deſcended to them from the apoſtles. And if Juſtin ſaid true, nothing can make more againſt their demonſtration of the infallibility of tradition, than the natural conſequence from theſe two ſayings of Euſebius and Juſtin, which is this, "that the miſtake of one ſimple "and credulous man may in an age or two give "occaſion to the univerſal entertainment of a doc-"trine, as deſcended down to them from CHRIST "and his apoſtles, when there was no ſuch matter." Hath not Mr. White now done his rule of faith great ſervice by this anſwer? But it is according to his manner in all his writings, to ſay any thing to remove a preſent objection, though never ſo much to the prejudice of his main hypotheſis; than which I do not know any quality in a writer which doth more certainly betray the want either of judgment, or of ſincerity, or of a good cauſe.

* Apol. p. 81.

§ 7. And whereas he ſays, "* that Irenæus his "teſtimony proves it to be no tradition; for he ſets "down the ſuppoſed words of our SAVIOUR, which "plainly ſhews it is a ſtory, not a tradition; a "tradition being a ſenſe delivered, not in ſet words, "but ſettled in the auditors hearts by hundreds

"of

" of different expreſſions explicating the ſame mean- SECT. IX.
" ing." When I conſider this paſſage of Mr. White, I confeſs I cannot compliment him, and ſay (as he makes his nephew do in the dialogue * between them) " I cannot but applaud your diſcourſe, it " hath ſo pleaſing and attractive a countenance." And again, " † I am not able to oppoſe what you ſay by " any weighty objection, your arguments being not " only ſtrong and nervous, but of ſo comely and " winning a complexion, &c." I cannot (I ſay) ſpeak all this of his preſent argument; but I may deſervedly apply to it the laſt part of his nephew's compliment, that it is an argument ſo framed, " as if, without any evidence of its conſequence, " it would perſuade men to believe it." But to return an anſwer to this paſſage: it ſeems (according to Mr. White) that Irenæus was miſtaken in the very nature of tradition: and if ſo learned a father was ignorant in the common rule of faith, " what can we (to uſe Mr. S's words *) under- * P. 39.
" takingly promiſe to weaker heads?" Mr. S. inſtanceth in the creed and ten commandments as the principal traditions which parents teach their children; but now Mr. White can ſhew plainly, " that " theſe are no traditions but ſtories, becauſe tradition " is a ſenſe delivered not in ſet words, &c." As if CHRIST and his apoſtles could deliver no doctrine unleſs they expreſſed the ſame thing an hundred ſeveral ways. But ſuppoſe they did ſo (which no man hath any reaſon to imagine, becauſe a thing may be expreſſed as plainly by one way as by an hundred) can no man deliver this tradition who ſpeaks it in any one of thoſe expreſſions? If

* Ruſhworth dial. 4. ſect. 4.

† Ibid. ſect. 5.

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one ſhould employ his ſervant to carry a meſſage, and (becauſe Mr. White thinks this neceſſary) ſhould ſettle the meaning of it in his heart, by telling him the ſame thing in an hundred ſeveral expreſſions; and the ſervant ſhould go and deliver this meſſage in one of thoſe very expreſſions that his maſter uſed to him, and ſhould ſay theſe were his maſter's very words; would not this be well enough?

No; if he had come to ſuch a philoſopher as Mr. White, he would ſoon have given him to underſtand that he was not fit to bring a meſſage, or to be credited in it, who had ſo little wit as not to know that a meſſage is a thing not to be delivered in ſet words. And now I would intreat Mr. White to reconcile himſelf in this matter to his friends. Mr. Ruſhworth ſays, "* 'Tis impoſ-
"ſible to put fully, and beyond all quarrel, the
"ſame ſenſe in divers words:" which, if it be true, I would fain know what certain courſe Mr. White can preſcribe to explicate the ſame meaning by hundreds of different expreſſions, and conſequently how tradition can be infallibly conveyed, by ſettling the ſenſe of it in the auditors hearts by ſuch variety of expreſſions. Mr. Creſſy * likewiſe (a zealous aſſertor of tradition) does affirm, "that
"the primitive churches were even to exceſs ſcru-
"pulous in maintaining the very phraſes of tradi-
"tionary doctrines; which (according to Mr.
"White) plainly ſhews theſe doctrines to be ſtories,
"not traditions, becauſe tradition is a ſenſe delivered
"not in ſet words." The ſame author complains,
"* that few among their learneded maſters of

* Dialog. 1. ſect. 6.

* Exomolog. c. 10. ſect. 4.

* Ibid. c. 19. ſect. 2.

con-

" controverſy, propoſe the points to be diſputed be- SECT. IX.
" tween them and the proteſtants in the language
" of the church." By which, I ſuppoſe, he does not mean, that theſe controvertiſts were to blame in that they did not ſettle the ſenſe of theſe points by hundreds of different expreſſions explicating the ſame meaning, but that they did not keep to the words wherein the church had in councils, or otherwiſe (if there be any other way) declared her ſenſe of thoſe points. Again * he ſays, " that St. Paul, * Ibid. c. 27. ſect. 2.
" referring to the doctrine ſettled by oral inſtruc-
" tion, to ſhew the uniformity of it every where,
" calls it a form of wholſom words." From whence we may conclude either that St. Paul did not well to call the traditionary doctrine (as Mr. Creſſy ſays he does) a form of words, or elſe (which is more probable) that Mr. White is miſtaken in ſaying, " that a tradition is a ſenſe not delivered in ſet
" words." Furthermore, the ſame * Mr. Creſſy * Ibid. c. 28. ſect. 1.
tells us, " that St. Auguſtine was careful not only
" to deliver traditional truths themſelves, but the
" terms alſo in which thoſe truths were conveyed
" to his times." But now Mr. White could have informed St. Auguſtine, that this officious care of his was not only ſuperfluous but pernicious to tradition.

§ 8. But to return to Juſtin's teſtimony; to which the ſum of Mr. White's anſwer, is, " that
" Juſtin eſteem'd it not as a point neceſſary
" to ſalvation, but rather a piece of learning
" higher than the common; ſince he both acknow-
" ledges other catholicks held the contrary, and
" entitles thoſe of his perſuaſion, κατὰ πάντα ὀρθο-

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" γνώμονες, right in all opinions, that is, wholly " of his own mind." It is not material to my purpoſe, whether or no Juſtin look'd upon this as a point neceſſary to ſalvation, ſo long as it is evident that he looked upon it as a divine revelation, and part of the chriſtian doctrine. And yet, it ſeems, he thought it a point of more than ordinary importance, becauſe he joins it with the doctrine of the reſurrection, and ſays that it was not diſowned by any but thoſe who alſo denied the reſurrection. But whereas Mr. White ſays, " that Juſtin acknow- " ledges other catholicks to have held the contra- " ry ; " I hope to make it evident from the ſcope and ſeries of his diſcourſe, that he acknowledges no ſuch thing; but that the plain deſign of his diſcourſe, is to ſhew that this doctrine was owned by all true chriſtians. For when Trypho asks him *, whether the chriſtians did indeed believe that Jeruſalem ſhould be rebuilt, *&c.* he returns him this anſwer, " I am not ſuch a wretch as to ſpeak other- " wiſe than I think. I have told thee before, that " my ſelf and many others (as ye all know) are " of the mind that this will come to paſs. But, " that many indeed of thoſe chriſtians who are " [not] of the pure and pious perſuaſion, do not " own this, I have intimated to thee." That the negative particle (though omitted in the copy) ought to be thus inſerted, will be clear to any one that conſiders what follows: for after he had ſpoken of thoſe who diſown this doctrine, he immediately adds, by way of farther deſcription of them, that though they are called chriſtians, yet in truth they are not chriſtians, in theſe words: " for of theſe (viz.

* Dial. cum Tryph. p. 306. Edit. Lutet. 1615.

" (viz. the disowners of this doctrine) who are called indeed christians, but are atheistical and impious hereticks, I have shewed thee that they teach in all points blasphemous, atheistical and absurd things. But that ye may know that I do not say this for you only, I will, according to my ability, compile all these discourses which have past between us into one piece; in which I will by writing make profession of this very thing which I now declare to you. For I do not choose to follow men or the doctrines of men, but GOD and such doctrines as are from him. And though ye may have conversed with some who are called christians, and yet do not acknowledge this; but even dare to blaspheme the GOD of Abraham, and the GOD of Isaac, and the GOD of Jacob; who also say that there is no resurrection of the dead, but that so soon as they die their souls are received into heaven: do not count these men christians; no more than a man, that considers things rightly, would own the sadducees, and such like sects, to be jews, *&c.* but I my self, and as many christians as are thoroughly of the right persuasion, do both know that there shall be a resurrection of the flesh, and a thousand years in Jerusalem, which shall be built, adorned and enlarged, *&c.*" Can any thing be plainer than that Justin endeavours by this discourse to satisfy Trypho, that this point they were speaking of was a divine doctrine, and owned to be so by all christians; except such as did only bear the name and title of christians, but were indeed blasphemous hereticks and deniers of the resurrection? SECT. IX.

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rection? by which character, that he intends to describe the impious sects of the gnosticks will appear by and by. So that Mr. White must either allow the inserting of the negative particle (which Mr. Mede * proves to have been omitted in the copy) or else acknowledge that those who are christians only in name, but in truth are impious blasphemous and absurd hereticks, may properly be said to be of the pure and pious opinion of the christians. And if only these be the other catholicks, whom Mr. White says Justin acknowledges to have held contrary to the millenaries, I am contented he should make his best of them. If Mr. White should blame the inserting of the negative particle [not] into Justin's text, as too great a boldness with the fathers; it were easily answered, that the sense evidently requires it: and in such a case it is no boldness, but such a liberty as the most learned of their own interpreters and commentators upon the fathers do frequently take. And as for Mr. S. if he takes offence at this, one may with reason (since the exigency of the sense plainly requires the inserting of it) demand of him (what he * unreasonably does of us in relation to all the affirmative propositions of scripture) to demonstrate that the particle [not] was not left out of this clause of Justin by those who transcribed the book. But besides the exigency of the sense in this place, that the negative ought to have been inserted, will appear by the reference which Justin makes in this passage to something foregoing in the same dialogue. "I have (says he) "declared to thee before, that my self and many "others are of the mind that this will come to "pass.

* Nov. edit. p. 664.

* P. 31.

" pafs. But, that many indeed of thofe chriftians, SECT. IX.
" who are [not] of the pure and pious perfuafion
" do not own this, I have intimated to thee. For
" of thefe, who are called indeed chriftians but are
" atheiftical and impious hereticks, I have fhewed
" thee that they teach in all points blafphemous,
" atheiftical, and abfurd things." In thefe words he plainly refers to fome precedent paffage, which if it can be found will be a certain key to open to us the fenfe of this place. I know that Mr. Mede * (perhaps not obferving it) thought that paffage to have been fraudulently expunged by the enemies of the millenary opinion: but it feems to me to be ftill extant; for I find towards the beginning of this dialogue, after that Juftin had endeavoured to prove at large out of fcripture this glorious coming of CHRIST, and to refute thofe who applied the texts produced by him to that purpofe to Hezekiah, and to Solomon, whofe falling off to idolatry he occafionally mentions; whereupon Trypho objects to him, that many who were called chriftians, did alfo communicate in the idol-feafts: to this, I fay, I find Juftin returning this anfwer: * firft, * P. 253.
he denies not, " * that there are fuch as thefe who
" own themfelves chriftians, and confefs the cruci-
" fied JESUS to be both LORD and CHRIST, and
" yet teach not his doctrines, but the doctrine of
" feducing fpirits." But, fays he, " we who are
" the difciples of the true and pure doctrine of
" JESUS CHRIST, are from this very thing the
" more ftrengthned in our faith, and become
" more confirmed in the hope which by him hath
" been declared to us. For now we fee thofe

" things

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" things visibly and effectually accomplish'd which " he before-hand told us would be done in his " name. For he said, many shall come in my " name, &c." By which hope any one that reads the antecedents and consequents, will plainly see that Justin means the hope of the millennium (which he had been speaking of before) and consequently of the resurrection, which he looked upon as having a strict connexion with the doctrine of the millennium, because (as he tells us afterwards) this doctrine was denied by none but such as also denied the resurrection. And of these men his description runs on in these words, πολλοὶ, &c. " Many (saith he) both are and have been, " that have come in the name of JESUS, and taught " both to speak and do atheistical and blasphemous " things; and are by us denominated from those men " from whom each of their doctrines and opinions had " its rise (namely as it follows, marcionites, valentinians, " &c.) and all these in their several ways teach men to " blaspheme the creator of the universe, and the " CHRIST, whose coming was foretold by him, and " the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But we " have no communion with them, as knowing them " to be atheistical and impious, &c." This passage in hand, when I compare it with the text before quoted and consider the words and characters of them both, I cannot but believe it the very same that he refers to in these words, " I have declared to thee, I " have intimated to thee, &c." If so, the matter in controversy is clear, that the doctrine of the millenium was universal: if it be not the same, I could wish to be shewed some other place in this dialogue where Justin makes any such declaration or intimation.

tion. In the mean while, by compariſon of theſe places, it is evident there are but two ſorts of men that Juſtin ſpeaks of. Firſt, "who believe the millenium? we the diſciples * of the true and pure "doctrine, &c. viz. myſelf and many others;" again, "myſelf and as many chriſtians as are thoroughly † of "the right perſuaſion." Secondly, "who deny the "millenium? many chriſtians, ſaith Juſtin: but "what chriſtians? of a right perſuaſion? that, ſaith "he, I have ſignified before, τὸς γδ', &c. for I have "ſhewed thee of them who are called chriſtians, but "are indeed atheiſts and impious hereticks, that "they teach blaſphemous and atheiſtical, and abſurd "things:" and true it is, he did ſhew before, "that "thoſe who denied the millenium were many in "number, and were called chriſtians, &c. but were "teachers of blaſphemous and atheiſtical things, &c. "and known to be atheiſts and impious, &c." But he ſhewed it of none other beſides theſe: ſo that if this doctrine were likewiſe denied by many chriſtians of the pure and pious perſuaſion, then Juſtin Martyr had foully forgot himſelf; but if not, then it is plain that the tranſcribers have wronged Juſtin, by leaving out a negative which ought to have been inſerted. It is worth obſerving by the way how Mr. White pleaſes himſelf with falſe and frivolous criticiſms upon the words πολλοὺς and ὀρθογνώμονες. Falſe they are, as Mr. White ſhall know if he deſires to hear any more of them; and frivolous they are render'd by my preceding diſcourſe; for which reaſon I ſay no more of them. But I think he may do well hereafter (as Mr. S. * warily ſuggeſts) not to engage himſelf, nor be hook'd by others, out of his own infallible way,

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* τῆς ἀληθινῆς καὶ καθαρᾶς διδασκαλίας.

† ὀρθογνωμονες.

* P. 68.

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PART. III. but leave it wholly to the * bird-witted hereticks (as Mr. S. calls them) to perch upon the ſpecifical natures of words, as he does of things.

* P. 69.

§ 9. Beſides theſe inſtances I have given of doctrines and practices, which Mr. S. cannot deny to have been innovated, I might inſtance likewiſe in the chief points of popery, and ſhew, that for all their pretence to tradition, they are really innovations. But becauſe this would engage me in tedious diſputes about particular points, I will only ſingle out one of their moſt fundamental doctrines, viz. that of tranſubſtantiation; concerning which I ſhall ſhew that, notwithſtanding it is the univerſal perſuaſion of the preſent Roman church, yet they have not, nor can have any aſſurance that it was the doctrine of CHRIST, and that it is deſcended to them by an uninterrupted tradition. I ſhall not at all contend againſt the word tranſubſtantiation (which is generally acknowledged to be new) but only the thing ſignified by it, a ſubſtantial change of the bread and wine into the body and blood of CHRIST. And this I might ſhew at large not to have been the doctrine of the ancient Fathers. But becauſe Mr. White and Dr. Holden, and Mr. Creſſy do ſo frequently and confidently tell us, that nothing is to be reputed a traditionary doctrine, the contrary whereof hath been publickly held by any catholick who continued afterwards uncenſured, and in the communion of the church: therefore I ſhall content myſelf at preſent with one clear teſtimony, and that of a very eminent perſon in the church, St. Theodoret, concerning whom pope Leo (in an epiſtle to him, at the end of Theodoret's works) gives this teſtimony, "that in the

" the judgment of the apoſtolick ſee he was free " from all ſtain of hereſy." The paſſage I intend is in his dialogues, between a catholick under the name of Orthodoxus, and Eraniſtes, who ſuſtained the perſon of an heretick. Eraniſtes * maintaining that the body of CHRIST was changed into the ſubſtance of the divinity, he illuſtrates it by this ſimilitude. " As " (ſays he) the ſymbols of the LORD's body and " blood are one thing before the invocation of the " prieſt; but after the invocation, are changed and do " become another thing: ſo the body of our LORD, " after his aſcenſion, is changed into the divine ſub- " ſtance." To which Orthodoxus returns this anſwer, " thou art caught in thine own net. Becauſe " the myſtical ſymbols after conſecration do not paſs " out of their own nature; for they remain in their " former ſubſtance, figure and appearance, and may " be ſeen and handled even as before." He does not only in expreſs words deny the ſubſtance of the ſymbols to be changed, but the occaſion upon which theſe words are brought in, and the ſcope of them (if they be of any force againſt the heretick's illuſtration) renders them uncapable of any other ſenſe. When Mr. S. hath anſwered this teſtimony, I have more for him.

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* Dialog. 2.

That which I mainly urge againſt this doctrine is, the monſtrous abſurdities and contradictions contain'd in it, together with the neceſſary conſequence of them. Several of the abſurdities of it are well brought together by Scotus *, who tells us, that to prove the poſſibility of CHRIST's body being contained under the ſpecies of bread and wine, many things muſt be proved which ſeem to involve a contradiction, as, 1. " That one quantum (or extended

* Diſtinct. 1. 4. diſt. 10. qu. 1 n. 3.

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" body) may be together in the very ſame place " with another. 2. That a leſs quantum may be to- " gether in the ſame place with a greater ;" i. e. a body of leſs extenſion may occupy not only the ſame, but as much room as a body of greater extenſion does; which is to ſay no more but this, that a body leſs than another may be as great as that other even whilſt it is leſs than it. 3. " That a greater quan- " tum may be together with every part of a leſs " quantum," i. e. a body that is greater than another, may be as little as the leaſt part of that other body which is leſs than it. 4. " That a ſubject may be " without quantity," i. e. there may be a body which hath no kind of magnitude. 5. That a body may be ſomewhere where it was not before, without changing its place, i. e. a body may be removed to another place, whilſt it remains ſtill in the ſame place. 6. " That a quantum may be without any " quantitative mode, i. e. a body may be extended without any manner of extenſion. " The poſſibi- " lity of all which, he ſaith (and I am very much of " his mind) it would be too tedious a work to " prove ;" and therefore he only attempts to prove the two laſt, which (in all reaſon) is work enough for one man. All theſe ſeeming contradictions (as he modeſtly calls them) are by his own acknowledgment involved in this doctrine. To theſe I might add many more, as how a thing can be ſaid to be changed into another thing which did exiſt before : how a body can be preſent in a place after the manner of a ſpirit : and yet this they affirm concerning the preſence of CHRIST's body in the ſacrament : one might as well ſay that ſnow is black, but not after the manner

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of blackneſs, but in the way of whiteneſs, which is to talk nonſenſe after the manner of ſenſe: How the whole body of CHRIST can be contained under the leaſt ſenſible part of the ſpecies of bread, as is generally affirmed: nay, and Scotus * adds, that the whole body is under every little part in its full proportion; for he ſays expreſly, "that the head and "the foot of the body of CHRIST are as far diſ-"tant from one another in the ſacrament, as they "are in heaven;" as if one ſhould ſay that a body, all whoſe parts lie within the compaſs of a ſmall pin's-head, may yet within that little compaſs have parts two yards diſtant from one another: and laſtly, "how the ſenſible ſpecies of bread, e. g. quantity, "whiteneſs, ſoftneſs, &c. can exiſt without any "ſubject:" to affirm the poſſibility of which (as generally they do) is to ſay that there may be quantities of white and ſoft nothings; for this is the plain engliſh of that aſſertion, "that ſenſible ſpecies "may exiſt without a ſubject;" which being ſtript of thoſe terms of art (ſpecies and ſubject) that do a little diſguiſe it, it appears to be plain nonſenſe.

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* Ibid. qu. 1. n. 11.

Now the proper and neceſſary conſequence of this doctrine is to take away all certainty, and eſpecially the certainty of ſenſe: for if that which my ſight and taſte and touch do all aſſure me to be a little piece of wafer, may notwithſtanding this be fleſh and blood, even the whole body of a man; then notwithſtanding the greateſt aſſurance that ſenſe can give me, that any thing is this or that, it may be quite another thing from what ſenſe reported it to be. If ſo, then farewel the infallibility of tradition, which depends upon the certainty of ſenſe: and which

is

PART III. is a worſe conſequence, if this doctrine be admitted, we can have no ſufficient aſſurance that the chriſtian doctrine is a divine revelation. For the aſſurance of that depending upon the aſſurance we have of the miracles ſaid to be wrought for the confirmation of it, and all the aſſurance we can have of a miracle depending upon the certainty of our ſenſes; it is very plain that that doctrine which takes away the certainty of ſenſe, does in ſo doing overthrow the certainty of chriſtian religion. And what can be more vain than to pretend, that a man may be aſſured that ſuch a doctrine is revealed by GOD, and conſequently true, which if it be true, a man can have no aſſurance at all of any divine revelation? ſurely nothing is to be admitted by us as certain, which being admitted we can be certain of nothing. It is a wonder that any man who conſiders the natural conſequences of this doctrine can be a papiſt; unleſs he have attained to Mr. Creſſy's pitch of learning, who ſpeaking of the difficult arguments wherewith this doctrine was preſſed, ſays * plainly, "I muſt "anſwer freely and ingenuouſly, that I have not "learned to anſwer ſuch arguments, but to deſpiſe "them." And if this be a good way, whenever we have a mind to believe any thing, to ſcorn thoſe objections againſt it which we cannot ſolve; then chriſtian religion hath no advantage above the vileſt enthuſiaſms; and a turk may maintain Mahomet and his alcoran (in oppoſition to CHRIST and his doctrine) againſt all that Grotius, or any other hath ſaid, if he can but keep his countenance, and gravely ſay, "I have not learned to anſwer "ſuch arguments, but to deſpiſe them."

* Exomol. c. 73. ſect. 2.

§ 10. I

§ 10. I will add one inſtance more in another kind, to ſhew the uncertainty of oral and practical traditions, and that ſhall be the tradition concerning pope Joan; than which ſcarce any thing was ever more generally received in the hiſtorical kind. Many and great authors affirm it, as teſtifiers of the general fame. None ever denied it till the reformers had made uſe of it to the diſadvantage of popery. Since that time not only papiſts deny it, but ſeveral of our own writers ceaſe to believe it. Phil. Bergomenſis tells the ſtory thus: "Anno 858. John the "7th pope, &c. The tradition is, "that this per-"ſon was a woman, &c." Here's an oral tradition. He concludes thus: "in deteſtation of whoſe filthineſs, "and to perpetuate the memory of her name, the "popes even to this day going on proceſſion with "the people and clergy, when they come to the "place of her travail, &c. in token of abomina-"tion they turn from it, and go a by-way; and be-"ing paſt that deteſtable place, they return into the "way, and finiſh their proceſſion." Here is one practical tradition. "And for avoiding the like "miſcarriages, it was decreed that no one ſhould "thereafter be admitted into St. Peter's chair, *pri-"uſquam per foratam ſedem futuri Pontificis genitalia "ab ultimo diacono cardinale attrectarentur:*" here is another with a witneſs. * Sabellicus relates the ſame; and moreover ſays, "that this porphyry chair was "in his time to be ſeen in the pope's palace." He adds indeed, "that Platina thinks that this tra-"dition of pope Joan was not faithfully delivered "to poſterity. But however (ſays he) ſuch a tradition "there is." Concerning the firſt practical tradition Platina

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* Enead. 9. l. 1.

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Platina says, "that he may not deny it." For the second, "he thinks the chair rather design'd for a "stool for another use, &c." He concludes, "these "things which I have related are commonly re- "ported, yet from uncertain and obscure authors: "therefore I resolved (says he) briefly and nakedly "to set them down, lest I should seem too obstinate- "ly and pertinaciously to have omitted that which "almost all affirm." It is no wonder that he says the authors of this report were uncertain and obscure, since so very few writ any thing in that age. But suppose none had writ of it, so long as he acknowledges it to have been a general oral tradition attested by a solemn and constant practice, it has (according to Mr. S's principles) greater certainty than if it had been brought down to us by a hundred books written in that very age. So that here's an oral and practical tradition, continued we are sure for some hundreds of years, preserved and propagated by a solemn practice of the popes, clergy, and people of Rome in their processions, and by a notorious custom at the election of every pope; and in a matter of so great importance to their religion (the honour of the see of Rome, and the uninterrupted succession from St. Peter being so nearly concerned in it) that, had it been false, they had been obliged under pain of damnation, not only not to have promoted it, but to have used all means to have discovered the falsity of it. Therefore Mr. S. is bound by his own principles either to allow it for a truth, or else to give an account when and how it began; which may possibly be made out by "we metaphysicians" (as he * styles himself, and his scientifical brethren) but I assure him it is past the skill of † note-book learning.

* P. 340.

† P. 337.

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SECT. X.

§ 1. IT is not the preſent perſuaſion of the church of Rome, nor ever was, that their faith hath deſcended to them by oral tradition as the ſole rule of it. And this being proved, the ſuppoſition upon which his demonſtration is built falls to the ground. The fourth anſwer to his ſecond demonſtration.

And for the proof of this, I appeal to that * decree of the council of Trent, in which they declare, "that becauſe the chriſtian faith and diſcipline are contained in written books and unwritten traditions, *&c.* therefore they do receive and honour the books of ſcripture and alſo tradition [*pari pietatis affectu ac reverentiâ*] with equal pious affection and reverence;" which I underſtand not how thoſe do who ſet aſide the ſcripture, and make tradition the ſole rule of their faith. And conſonantly to this decree, the general doctrine of the Romiſh church is, "that ſcripture and tradition make up the rule of faith." So the Roman catechiſm (ſet forth by order of the council of Trent) ſays, "* that the ſum of the doctrine delivered to the faithful is contained in the word of GOD, which is diſtributed into ſcripture and tradition." Bellarmine * ſpeaks to the ſame purpoſe, "that the ſcripture is a rule of faith, not an entire but partial one. The entire rule is the word of GOD, which is divided into two partial rules, ſcripture, and tradition." According to this, the adequate rule of faith is the word of GOD; which is contained partly in ſcripture, and partly in the

* Decret. primum quartæ ſeſſ.

* In præfat.

* De verbo Dei, &c. l. 4. 12.

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tradition of the church. And that ſcripture is look'd upon by them as the principal rule and primary foundation of their faith, and tradition as only ſupplying the defects of ſcripture, as to ſome doctrines and rites not contained in ſcripture, muſt be evident to any one that has been converſant in the chief of their controverſial divines. Bellarmine * where he gives the marks of a divine tradition, ſpeaks to this purpoſe, " that that which they call a " divine tradition is ſuch a doctrine or rite as is " not found in ſcripture, but embraced by the " whole church; and for that reaſon believed to " have deſcended from the apoſtles." And he tells us farther, " * that the apoſtles committed all to " writing which was commonly and publickly " preached; and that all things are in ſcripture, " which men are bound to know and believe ex- " plicitly:" but then he ſays, " that there were " other things which the apoſtles did not common- " ly and publickly teach; and theſe they did not " commit to writing, but delivered them only by " word of mouth to the prelates and prieſts and " perfect men of the church." And theſe are the apoſtolical traditions he ſpeaks of. Cardinal Perron * ſays, " that the ſcripture is the foundation of the " chriſtian doctrine, either mediately or immedi- " ately. And that the authority of unwritten tra- " dition is founded in general on theſe ſentences of " the apoſtle, * hold the traditions, *&c.*" Again, " † the things which thou haſt heard of me among " many witneſſes commit to faithful men, *&c.*" And " that the authority of the church to preſerve, " and eſpecially to declare theſe, is founded in this " propo-

* De verbo Dei non ſcripto, l. 4. c. 9.

* Ibid. c. 11.

* Reply obſerv. 3. c. 4.

* 2 Theſſ. ii. 15.

† 2 Tim. ii. 2.

" propoſition, *viz.* * that the church is the pillar " and ground of truth." So that according to him, the primary rule of faith is the ſcripture, in which the authority of tradition is founded. Mr. Knott * ſays expreſly, " we acknowledge the holy ſcrip- " ture to be a moſt perfect rule, for as much as a " writing can be a rule; we only deny that it ex- " cludes, either divine tradition, though it be un- " written, or an external judge to keep, to pro- " poſe, to interpret it, *&c.*" So that (according to him) ſcripture is a perfect rule, only it does not exclude unwritten tradition, *&c.* by which that he does not underſtand (as Mr. S. does) a concurrent oral tradition of all the ſame doctrines which are contained in ſcripture, but other doctrines not therein contained, is plain from what he ſays elſewhere, " * we do not diſtinguiſh tradition from the writ- " ten word, becauſe tradition is not written by " any, or in any book or writing; but becauſe it " is not written in the ſcripture or bible;" Bellarmine † alſo ſays the ſame. And as for the interpreting of ſcripture, he tells us, " that this is " not the office of a rule, but of a judge." " * There is (ſays he) a great and plain diſtinc- " on between a judge and a rule. For as in a " kingdom the judge hath his rule to follow, which " are the received laws and cuſtoms; which are not " fit or able to declare, and be judges them- " ſelves, but that office muſt belong to a living " judge: ſo the holy ſcripture is and may be a rule, " but cannot be a judge." Here he makes the ſcripture as much a rule for matters of faith, as the laws of the land are for civil matters. And in his

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* 1 Tim. iii. 15.

* Charity maintained. c. 2. ſect. 1.

* Reply to Mr. Chill. c. 2. ſect. 170.

† De verbo Dei, &c. l. 4. c. 2.

* Charity maintained, c. 2. ſect. 3.

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reply to Mr. Chillingworth, he hath a chapter of above 150 pages, the title whereof is, "ſcripture is "not the only rule of faith;" which (had he with Mr. S. believed oral tradition to be the ſole rule of faith) had been as abſurd as it would be to write a book to prove that turks are not the only chriſtians in the world. Mr. Creſſy likewiſe (not very conſiſtently to himſelf) lays down this concluſion;

* Exomol. c. 20. "* the entire rule of faith is contained not only in "ſcripture, but likewiſe in unwritten tradition."

§ 2. Now all this is as contrary as can be to Mr. Ruſhworth's new rule of faith. Therefore

* Tabul. ſuffrag. p. 96. Mr. White ſays, * "they ſpeak ill who teach "that ſome things are known in the church from "ſcripture, ſome by tradition." And Dr. Holden (in oppoſition to thoſe who make ſcripture any part of the rule of faith) advances one of the moſt wild and uncharitable poſitions that ever I yet met withal,

* Analyſ. fid. l. 1. c. 6. viz, "* that if one ſhould believe all the articles of "the catholick faith, *&c.* for this reaſon becauſe "he thought they were all expreſly revealed in "ſcripture, or implicitly contained, ſo as they "might be deduced from thence, and would not "have believed them, had he not judged that they "might be evinced from ſcripture; yet this man "could be no true catholick: becauſe (as he tells

† C. 8. "us afterwards †) we muſt receive the chriſtian "doctrine as coming to us by tradition; for only "by this means (excluding the ſcriptures) CHRIST "hath appointed revealed truths to be received and "communicated." In the mean time cardinal Perron (unleſs he altered his mind) is in a ſad caſe, who believed the authority of tradition it ſelf

for

for this reaſon, becauſe it was founded in ſcripture. SECT. X.

§ 3. And this fundamental difference about the rule of faith, between the generality of their divines and Mr. S's ſmall party, is fully acknowledged by the traditioniſts themſelves. Dr. Holden ſays, "* that "their divines who reſolve faith according to the "common opinion, do inevitably fall into that ſhame- "ful circle (of proving the divine authority of the "ſcripture by the church, and the infallibility of the "church back again by the ſcripture) becauſe they "dare not build their faith upon the natural evidence "and certainty of tradition." So that Dr. Holden's way of reſolving faith, is different from the common opinion of their divines, "which he ſays * does not "differ from the opinion of thoſe who reſolve their "faith into the private ſpirits;" and this (according to Mr. White *) is the very way of the calviniſts, and of the abſurdeſt ſects. Nay, Mr. White ſays farther *, that he will be content to ſuffer all the puniſhment that is due to calumniators, if the roman divines (he there ſpeaks of) do not hold the ſame rule of faith with the calviniſts, and all the abſurdeſt ſects. So that it ſeems that the calviniſts, &c. do not in their rule of faith differ from the papiſts, but only from Mr. White, Mr. S. &c. Now the divines he there ſpeaks of, are the cenſors of doctrines at Rome, according to whoſe advice his infallible holineſs and the cardinals of the inquiſition do uſually proceed in cenſuring of doctrines. Concerning theſe divines he goes on to expoſtulate in this manner; "* ſhall we endure theſe men to ſit as cenſors and "judges of faith, who agree with hereticks in the "very

* L. 1. c. 9.

* L. 1. c. 3.

* Exetaſ. p. 70.

* Ibid.

* Ib. p. 73.

PART III. "very firſt principle which diſtinguiſhes catholicks "from hereticks?" Again, "* theſe are thy gods,
* P. 144. "O Rome! upon theſe thou dependeſt, whilſt prat-
"ing ignorance triumphs in the Roman college."
And he ſays the ſame likewiſe of the generality of the ſchool-divines, whom he calls ſcepticks, becauſe they do not own his demonſtrative way. Inſomuch
* P. 64. that he tells us, "* that few ſound parts are left unin-
† P. 149. "fected with this plague of ſcepticiſm; † that this is
* P. 67, 68. "an univerſal gangrene; * that there are but few "that go the way of demonſtration, and theſe are ei-
"ther wearied out, or elſe live retiredly, or deſpair "of any remedy of theſe things." And indeed all along that book he bemoans himſelf and his traditionary brethren as a deſolate and forlorn party, who have truth on their ſide, but want company and en-
* P. 101. couragement. So he tells us, "* that the true ſcien-
"tifical divines dare not profeſs their knowledge, leſt "they ſhould be expoſed by the ſophiſters of their "church to the deriſion and ſcorn either of their "judges or of the people."

§ 4. So that upon examination of the whole matter, it appears that Mr. S's demonſtration proceeds upon a falſe ſuppoſition, "that it is the perſuaſion of "their preſent church, that tradition is the ſole rule "of faith." For there is no ſuch matter; unleſs Mr. S. mean by their church a few private perſons, who are looked upon by thoſe who have the chief power in their church as heretical: as we may reaſonably conjecture by the proceedings at Rome againſt Mr. White; many of whoſe books are there con-
* Exetaſ. demned, "* as containing things manifeſtly hereti-
P. 9. "cal, erroneous in the faith, raſh, ſcandalous, ſedi-
"tious,

" tious, and falſe reſpectively, &c." And all this done, notwithſtanding that the chief ſubject of thoſe books is the explication and defence of this moſt catholick principle, " that oral tradition is the only " rule of faith." To ſum up then the whole buſineſs: if nothing be to be owned for chriſtian doctrine (as the traditioniſts ſay) but what is the general perſuaſion of thoſe who are acknowledged to be in the communion of the roman catholick church; then much leſs can this principle (" that oral tradition is " the ſole rule of faith") which is pretended to be the foundation of the whole chriſtian doctrine, be received as deſcended from CHRIST and his apoſtles; ſince it is ſo far from being the general perſuaſion of that church at preſent, that it has been, and ſtill is generally diſowned. But Mr. White has a ſalvo for this. For although he grants, " * that very ma- " ny of their ſchoolmen maintain that tradition is " neceſſary only for ſome points not clearly expreſſed " in ſcripture, whence (he ſays) it ſeems to follow " that they build not the whole body of their faith " upon tradition:" yet he tells us, " there is a vaſt " difference betwixt relying on tradition, and ſaying " or thinking we do ſo." Suppoſe there be; yet I hope that mens ſaying that they do not rely on tradition as their only rule, is a better evidence that they do not, than any man's ſurmiſe to the contrary is that they do, tho' they think and ſay they do not; which is in effect to ſay that they do, tho' we have as much aſſurance as we can that they do not. Beſides, " how is " this rule ſelf-evident to all, even to the rude vulgar as " to its ruling power" (as Mr. S. affirms it is) when the greateſt part even of the learned among them think

SECT. X.

* Apolog. p. 38.

PART III.

think and say that it is not the only rule? But Mr. White endeavours to illustrate this dark point by a * similitude, which is to this sense; as the scepticks who deny this principle, "that contradictions can-"not be true at once, yet in their lives and civil "actions proceed as if they owned it:" so the schoolmen, though they deny tradition to be the only rule of faith, yet by resolving their faith into the church which owns this principle, they do also in practice own it though they say they do not. So that the generality of learned papists are just such catholicks as the scepticks are dogmatists, that is, a company of absurd people that confute their principles by their practice. According to this reasoning I perceive the protestants will prove as good catholicks as any, for they do not only think and say that tradition is not the rule of faith; but that they practically rely upon it, Mr. S. hath past his word for them: for he assures us * (and we may rely upon a man that writes nothing but demonstration) "that if we look narrowly into the bot-"tom of our hearts, we shall discover the natural "method of tradition, to have unawares settled our "judgments concerning faith; however, when our "other concerns awake design in us, we protest "against it, and seem perhaps to our unreflecting "selves to embrace and hold to the mere guidance "of the letter of scripture." So that in reality we are as good catholicks, and as true holders to tradition as any papists of them all, at the bottom of our thoughts and in our settled judgment; however we have taken up an humour to protest against it, and may seem perhaps to our unreflecting selves to be protestants.

* Ibid. p. 39.

* P. 30, & 31.

§ 5. Thus

§ 5. Thus much may ſuffice to have ſpoken to his two great arguments; or * as he (good man) unfortunately calls them demonſtrations; which yet to ſay truth are not properly his, but the author of Ruſhworth's dialogues, the main foundation of which book is the ſubſtance of theſe demonſtrations. Only before I take leave of them, I cannot but reflect upon a paſſage of Mr. S's *, wherein he tells his readers, "that they are not obliged to bend their "brains to ſtudy his book with that ſeverity as they "would do an euclid;" meaning perhaps one of Mr. White's euclids; for it does not appear by his way of demonſtration that ever he dealt with any other. As for the true euclid, I ſuppoſe any one that hath taſted his writing, will at the reading of Mr. S's unbend his brains without bidding, and ſmile to ſee himſelf ſo demurely diſcharged from a ſtudy ſo abſurd and ridiculous.

SECT. XI.

* P. 173.

* P. 163.

SECT. XI.

§ 1. I Should now take into conſideration his ninth diſcourſe, in which he pretends "to "open the incomparable ſtrength of the church's "humane authority, and the advantages which accrue "to it by the ſupernatural aſſiſtances of the HOLY "GHOST:" but that there is nothing material in it, which hath not been anſwered already. Only I deſire him to explain, how the ſupernatural aſſiſtances of the HOLY GHOST, can (according to his principles) add to our aſſurance of the certainty of tradition. Becauſe we can have no greater certainty of the ſupernatural aſſiſtance of the HOLY GHOST,

Concerning ſome other advantages of tradition, &c.

PART III.

than we have that there is an HOLY GHOST, and of this we can have no certainty (according to Mr. S.) but by tradition, which conveys this doctrine to us. And if tradition of itself can infallibly assure us that there are supernatural assistances of the HOLY GHOST, then a man must know that tradition is infallible antecedently to his knowledge of any supernatural assistance. And if so, what can any supernatural assistance add to my assurance of the certainty of tradition, which I do suppose to be infallible before I can know of any supernatural assistance? Can any thing be more ludicrous, than to build first all our certainty of the assistance of the HOLY GHOST upon the certainty of tradition, and then afterwards to make the certainty of tradition to rely upon the assistance of the HOLY GHOST? as if that could contribute to our assurance of the certainty of tradition, which unless tradition be first supposed certain, is it self wholly uncertain.

§ 2. The conclusion of this ninth discourse is somewhat ecstatical; possibly from a sudden disorder of his fancy upon the contemplation of his own performances, to see what a man he has made of himself (with the help of Rushworth's dialogues) or rather what his party has made him by the office they put upon him: for it seems (by his telling) "* Mr. "Cressy and the rest are ordained to cajole the fools, "leaving him the way of reason and principles; and "that himself is chosen out to demonstrate to the "wise, or those who judge of things *per altissimas* "*causas*." In the discharge of which glorious office, he declares, "that he intends no confutation "of

* P. 165, 166.

" of thoſe authors which Mr. Creſſy and others have SECT. XI.
" meddled with: yet if any will be ſo charitable as
" to judge he hath ſolidly confuted them, becauſe
" he hath radically and fundamentally overthrown
" all their arguments, &c. he ſhall rejoice and be
" thankful." That the * intelligent reader (for he * P. 159.
writes to none but ſuch) may alſo rejoice with him, I ſhall recite the whole paſſage, for it is thick of demonſtration, and as likely as any in his book to have the *altiſſimas cauſas* contained in it.

§ 3. " * It would require a large volume to un- * P. 93.
" fold particularly how each virtue contributes to
" ſhew the inerrable indeficiency of tradition, and
" how the principles of almoſt each ſcience are con-
" cerned in demonſtrating its certainty: arithme-
" tick lends her numbring and multiplying faculty,
" to ſcan the vaſt number of teſtifiers; geometry
" her proportions to ſhew a kind of infinite
" ſtrength of certitude in chriſtian tradition, above
" thoſe atteſtations which breed certainty in hu-
" mane affairs; logick her skill to frame and make
" us ſee the connexions it has with the princi-
" ples of our underſtanding; nature her laws of
" motion and action; morality her firſt principles
" that nothing is done gratis by a cognoſcitive na-
" ture, and that the body of traditionary doctrine
" is moſt conformable to practical reaſon: hiſtori-
" cal prudence clears the impoſſibility of an undiſ-
" cernable revolt from points ſo deſcended and held
" ſo ſacred: politicks ſhew this to be the beſt way
" imaginable to convey down ſuch a law as it con-
" cerns every man to be skilful in; metaphyſicks
" engages the eſſences of things, and the very notion

PART III.

" of being which fixes every truth, so establishing " the scientifical knowledges which spring from each " particular nature by their first causes or reasons " exempt from changes or motion. Divinity demon- " strateth it most worthy GOD, and most conducive " to bring mankind to bliss. Lastly, controversy " evidences the total uncertainty of any thing con- " cerning faith if this can be uncertain, and makes " use of all the rest to establish the certainty of " this first principle." A very fit conclusion for such demonstrations as went before. It is well Mr. S. writes to none but intelligent readers; for were it not a thousand pities, that so manly, and solid, and convincing a discourse as this should be cast away upon fools?

SECT. XII.

Mr. S's corollaries consider'd.

§ 1. AS for his corollaries, supposing them to be rightly deduced from his former discourses, they must of necessity fall with them. For they signify nothing, but upon this supposition that his foregoing discourses are true. And yet this being granted, it were easy to shew that most of them are grosly faulty. For first, several of them are plainly coincident. The second, viz. " None can with right " pretend to be a church, but the followers of tradi- " tion," is the very same in sense with the 11th, viz. " No company of men hang together like a body of " a christian commonwealth or church, but that " which adheres to tradition." So likewise the 12th and 14th are contained in the 15th: the 16th and 17th in the 19th: the 16th, 17th, 18th, and 19th, in the

the 21ſt. And the 32d and 34th in the 31ſt. Secondly, divers of them are manifeſtly abſurd, as the 12th, 13th, 14th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th; the ſum of which is, "that there is no arguing againſt tradi-"tion from ſcripture, or the authority of the church, "or fathers and councils, or from hiſtory and teſti-"monial writings, or from contrary tradition, or rea-"ſon, or any inſtances whatſoever:" which is as much as to ſay, "if this propoſition be true, that tradition is "certain, then it cannot by any kind of argument be "proved to be falſe." But is this any peculiar conſectary from the truth of this propoſition? doth not the ſame follow from every propoſition, that if it be true, it cannot be proved to be falſe? yet no man was ever yet ſo frivolous, as to draw ſuch a conſequence from the ſuppoſed truth of any propoſition. His 23d alſo is ſingularly abſurd, "that there is no poſſibility of "arguing at all againſt tradition rightly underſtood, "or the living voice of the catholick church, with "any ſhew of reaſon." Theſe are large words. It might have contented a reaſonable man to have ſaid, that no good argument could be brought againſt it: but he is jealous of his hypotheſis, and can never think it ſafe till it be ſhot-free; nor will that content him, but it muſt alſo be impoſſible for any one to make a ſhew of ſhooting at it. This were, I confeſs, a peculiar privilege of Mr. S's diſcourſes above other mens; if they were (as he ſays) by evidence of demonſtration ſo ſecured, that not only no ſubſtantial argument could be brought againſt them, but that even the moſt ſubtile ſchoolman of them all ſhould not be able to come near them with ſo much as a *videtur quod non*. But it may be he means no more by this

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this corollary, than what he ſaid in the 18th, viz. " that no ſolid argument from reaſon can be brought " againſt tradition:" If ſo, then the ſenſe of his 23d corollary muſt be this, " that there is no poſſi- " bility of arguing at all againſt tradition with any " ſolid ſhew, or ſubſtantial ſhadow of reaſon;" which would be a little inconvenient. I will inſtance but in one more, his 40th, which is this, " the knowledge " of tradition's certainty is the firſt knowledge or " principle in controverſial divinity; i. e. without " which nothing is known or knowable in that ſci- " ence." Which is to infer, that becauſe he hath with much pains proved the certainty of tradition, therefore it is ſelf-evident, i. e. needed no proof. Nay, it is to conclude the preſent matter in contro- verſy, and that which is the main debate of his book to be the firſt principle in controverſial divinity, i. e. ſuch a propoſition as every one ought to grant before he can have any right to diſpute about it. This is a very prudent courſe, to make begging the firſt queſ- tion the firſt principle in controverſy; which would it but be granted, I am very much of his mind that the method he takes would be the beſt way to make con- troverſy a ſcience; becauſe he that ſhould have the luck or boldneſs to beg firſt, would have it in his power to make what he pleaſed certain.

§ 2. Were it worth while, I might farther purſue the abſurdities of his corollaries. For they are not ſo terrible as he makes ſhew of, by his telling Dr. Ca- ſaubon, " * that ſure-footing and its corollaries may " put him out of his wits:" which though intended for an affront to the doctor, yet it may be mollified with a good interpretation; for if the reading of

* P. 330.

wild

wild and fantaſtical ſtuff be apt to diſorder a very learned head, then ſo far Mr. S's ſaying may have truth in it.

It remains only that I requite his 41ſt corollary, not with an equal number, but with two or three natural conſectaries from the doctrine of his book.

Firſt, no man can certainly underſtand the meaning of any book whatſoever, any farther than the contents of it are made known to us by a concurrent oral tradition. For the arguments whereby he and Mr. Ruſhworth endeavour to prove it impoſſible without tradition to attain to the certain ſenſe of ſcripture, do equally extend to all other books.

Secondly, the memory of matters of fact done long ago may be better preſerved by general rumour than by publick records. For this is the plain engliſh of that aſſertion, "that oral tradition is a better and "more ſecure way of conveyance than writing."

Thirdly, that the generality of papiſts are no chriſtians: for if (as he affirms) tradition be the ſole rule of faith, and thoſe who diſown this rule be *ipſo facto* cut off from the root of faith, i. e. unchriſtian'd; and if (as I have ſhewn) the generality of papiſts do diſown this rule: then it is plain that they are no chriſtians.

THE

THE RULE of FAITH.

PART IV.

Teſtimonies concerning the rule of faith.

SECT. I.

PART IV. Mr. S's teſtimonies examined.

§ 1. THUS far in the way of reaſon and principles. The reſt is note-book learning, which he tells us "* he is "not much a friend to;" and there is no kindneſs loſt, for it is as little a friend to him and his cauſe as he can be to it. I ſhall firſt examine the authorities he brings for tradition; and then produce expreſs teſtimonies in behalf of ſcripture. In both which I ſhall be very brief; in the one, becauſe his teſtimonies require no long anſwer; in the other, becauſe it would be to little purpoſe to trouble Mr. S. with many fathers, who, for ought appears by his book, is acquainted with none but father White, as I ſhall ſhew hereafter. By the way, I cannot much blame him for the courſe he uſes to take with other mens teſtimonies, becauſe it is the only way that a man in his circumſtances can take; otherwiſe, nothing can be in it ſelf more unreaſonable, than to pretend to anſwer teſtimonies by ranking them under ſo many faulty heads; and having ſo done, magiſterially to require his adverſary

* P. 337.

verſary to vindicate them, by ſhewing that they do not fall under ſome of thoſe heads, though he have not ſaid one word againſt any of them particularly; nay, though he have not ſo much as recited any one of them; for then the trick would be ſpoiled, and his catholick reader, who perhaps may believe him in the general, might ſee reaſon not to do ſo if he ſhould deſcend to particulars, which (as he well obſerves) would make his "* diſcourſe to look with a contingent face." SECT. I. * P. 161.

§ 2. I begin with his three authorities from ſcripture; which when I conſider, I ſee no reaſon why he (of all men) ſhould find fault with my lord biſhop of Down's diſſuaſive for being ſo "* thin and "ſleight in ſcripture-citations." Nor do I ſee how he will anſwer it to Mr. Ruſhworth, for tranſgreſſing that prudent rule of his, viz. "* that "the catholick ſhould never undertake to convince "his adverſary out of ſcripture, &c." For which he gives this ſubſtantial reaſon, "* becauſe this "were to ſtrengthen his opponent in his own ground "and principle, viz. that all is to be proved out "of ſcripture;" which he tells us preſently after is no more fit to convince, "than a beetle is to cut "withal;" meaning it perhaps of texts ſo applied as theſe which follow. "* This ſhall be "to you a direct way, ſo that fools cannot err "in it. † This is my covenant with them, ſaith "the LORD; my ſpirit which is in thee, and my "words which I have put in thy mouth ſhall not depart from thy mouth, and from the mouth of thy "ſeed, and from the mouth of thy ſeeds ſeed from "henceforth for ever. * I will give my law in their "bowels, * P. 320. * Dial. 2. ſect. 4. * Ibid. * Iſa. 35. 8. † Iſa. 59. 21. * Jer. 31. 33.

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" bowels, and in their hearts will I write it :" From which texts if Mr. S. can prove tradition to be the only rule of faith, any better than the philoſophers ſtone or the longitude may be proved from the firſt chapter of Geneſis, I am content they ſhould paſs for valid teſtimonies : tho' I might require of him (by his own law) before theſe texts can ſignify any thing to his purpoſe, to demonſtrate that this is the traditionary ſenſe of theſe texts, and that it hath been univerſally in all ages received by the church under that notion ; and then to ſhew how it comes to paſs that ſo many of the fathers, and of their own commentators have interpreted them to another ſenſe : and laſtly, to ſhew how ſcripture which has no certain ſenſe but from tradition, and of the ſenſe whereof tradition cannot aſſure us, unleſs it be the rule of faith ; I ſay, how ſcripture can prove tradition to be the rule of faith, which can prove nothing at all unleſs tradition be firſt proved to be the rule of faith. This I take to be as ſhameful a circle, as that wherewith Dr. Holden upbraids the generality of his brethren.

§ 3. I proceed to his authorities from fathers and councils ; (all which not one of them excepted) he hath taken out of Mr. White's *tabulæ ſuffragiales*, without the leaſt acknowledgment from whom he had them. And that it might be evident that he had not conſulted the books themſelves for them, he hath taken them with all their faults, and with the very ſame errors of citation which Mr. White had been guilty of before him. So that though he is pleaſed to ſay of himſelf " that * he is a bad

* P. 239.

" tran-

" tranſcriber," yet I muſt do him that right, to aſ- SECT. I.
ſure the reader that he does it very punctually and exactly.

§ 4. He begins with councils, of which he tells us he will only mention three in ſeveral ages.

The firſt is the firſt ſynod of Lateran. One might have expected, after he had told us he would mention three in ſeveral ages, he ſhould have produced them according to the order of time, and have begun with the council of Sardica, which was near 300 years before the Lateran. But there was a good reaſon why the Lateran ſhould be firſt produced, viz. becauſe it is mentioned before the other in Mr. White's book. Well, but what ſays this ſynod? " we all confeſs unanimouſly, and conſe- " quently with one heart and mouth, the tenets and " ſayings of the holy fathers; adding nothing, ſub- " ſtracting nothing of thoſe things which are deli- " vered us by them; and we believe as the fathers " have believed, we preach ſo as they have taught." The force of which teſtimony Mr. S. lays upon the word delivered, as if that word where-ever it is met with in councils or fathers, muſt needs be underſtood of oral delivery; whereas it is a general word indifferently uſed for conveyance either by writing or word of mouth. In this place it plainly refers to the writings of particular fathers, out of whom a long catalogue of teſtimonies againſt the hereſy of the monothelites had been read juſt before this declaration of the ſynod. Now what ſignifies this to oral tradition's being the rule of faith, that this ſynod declares her faith, in oppoſition to the hereſy of the monothelites, to be conſonant in all

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things to those testimonies which had been produced out of the fathers?

The next is the council of Sardica; out of en epistle of which council he cites these words, "we have "received this doctrine, we have been taught so, "we hold this catholick tradition, faith and confes- "sion." Which are general words, and indifferently applicable to oral tradition, or writing, or both. But be they what they will, Mr. S. ought not to have been ignorant, that this council was rejected by St. Austin, and other orthodox fathers, as * Binius acknowledges; and which is more, that the latter part of this epistle (out of which part Mr. S. cites these words) which contains a confession of faith, is by * Baronius (and after him by Binius) proved to have been surreptitiously added. For though it be found in Theodoret, and mentioned by Sozomen; yet Baronius thinks that it was the arian confession composed by the false synod of Sardica which sate at the same time; and that Sozomen lighting upon it, perhaps mistook it for the confession of the orthodox synod of the same name. However that be, he proves out of Athanasius, and from the testimony both of the eastern and western bishops, "that council of Sardica did not so much "as add one word or tittle, no nor so much as "explain any thing in the Nicene faith." But Mr. White says nothing of this, and therefore Mr. S. could not, who is no speculator in these matters, but only as a testifier delivers down these authorities to us as he received them by hand from Mr. White; and if the word tradition be but in them, they are demonstrative.

* Concil. tom. 1.

* An. 347.

As

As for his teſtimonies from the ſecond council of Nice, (which he calls the ſeventh general council) who pretended their doctrine of image-worſhip to have deſcended to them by an uninterrupted tradition, and proved it moſt doughtily by texts of ſcripture ridiculouſly wreſted, by impertinent ſayings out of obſcure and counterfeit authors, and by fond and immodeſt ſtories (as is acknowledged by pope * Adrian the 6th) of apparitions and womens dreams, &c. for which I refer the reader to the council it ſelf; which is ſuch a meſs of fopperies, that if a general council of atheiſts had met together with a deſign to abuſe religion by talking ridiculouſly concerning it, they could not have it done more effectually: I ſay, as for his teſtimonies from this council, I ſhall refer Mr. S. to that weſtern council under Charles the great, which a little after at Francfort condemned, and alſo fully confuted the deciſions of this council, calling their pretended "tradition of image-worſhip [*putidiſſimam traditionem*] a moſt ſtinking tradition." SECT. I.

* Quodlibet 6. cited by Eſpencæus in 2d. epiſt. ad Tim. c. 4.

Theſe are his authorities from councils; "where (ſays he) we ſee general councils relying on the "teaching of the fathers or foregoing church, and "on the church's tradition as their rule, &c." where does he ſee any ſuch matter? or where does he ſee general councils? was the council of Lateran a general one? or was the council of Sardica? if it was, let him ſhew how the ſecond of Nice could be the ſeventh general council. Mr. White muſt write more explicitly, and ſay which are general councils, which not, otherwiſe he will lead his friends into dangerous miſtakes.

§ 4. "After

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§ 4. " After ancient councils (not ſo ancient nei-
" ther) let us (ſays he) give a glance at fathers."
Glance is a modeſt word, and yet I doubt whether
ever the fathers had ſo much as that from him.
Before I ſpeak particularly to his teſtimonies from
the fathers, I ſhall mind him of what Mr. Ruſh-
* Dial. 3. ſect. 13. worth ſays in general, viz. " * that he who ſeeks
" tradition in the fathers, and to evince it by their
" teſtimony, takes an hard task upon him, &c."
† Ibid. Again, " † as in other points, ſo even in this of
" the reſolution of faith, as doctors ſeem to differ
" now-a-days, ſo might the fathers alſo." If this
be true, Mr. S. is not likely by a few teſti-
monies out of the fathers, to prove that tradition is
the ſole rule of faith. But let us ſee what he has
done towards it.

He begins with a ſaying of pope Celeſtine to the
fathers of the Epheſine council. " Now therefore
" we muſt act with a common endeavour to pre-
" ſerve things believed, and retained to this very
" time by ſucceſſion from the apoſtles." Binius's
other reading of [διδαχῆς for διαδοχῆς] quite ſpoils
the force of this citation which Mr. S. put upon the
word ſucceſſion. But read it how he will; why
may not the chriſtian doctrine be ſaid to come by
ſucceſſion from the apoſtles, when it is tranſmitted
to us by ſcripture, as well as when by oral tradi-
tion? I am ſure the ſame Celeſtine in an epiſtle to
Cyril, commends him for defending the faith by
ſcripture: " this (ſays he) is a great triumph of
" our faith, to demonſtrate our opinions ſo ſtrong-
" ly, and to overthrow the contrary by teſtimo-
" nies from ſcripture." And neither in this epiſtle,

nor

nor the other, does he make any mention of oral tradition. SECT. I.

Next he cites that known place in Irenæus: "but what if the apoſtles had not left us the ſcrip- "tures, ought we not to follow the order of tra- "dition, &c.?" this makes clearly againſt him; for it implies, that now the apoſtles have left us the ſcriptures, we ought to follow them. The other paſſage he cites out of Irenæus, lib. 1. c. 3. is a clear eviction that he did not conſult the book. For he puts two ſayings together which he had met with in Mr. White, immediately one after the other; and becauſe Mr. White had cited lib. 1. c. 3. for the firſt ſaying, and brought in the other immediately upon it with an (*et rurſus*) again, &c. Therefore Mr. S. (who is of a right traditionary temper, which is to take things eaſily upon truſt himſelf, and require demonſtration from others) concluded that theſe ſayings were in the ſame place, though in truth they are in ſeveral books. As for the teſtimony it ſelf, there is nothing in it to Mr. S's purpoſe beſides the word tradition, which Irenæus does often apply to ſcripture as well as oral tradition; and there is nothing in this place to determine it to oral tradition.

His teſtimonies out of Origen will do him leſs ſtead: for every one that hath been converſant in the writings of that father, knows what he means by the church's tradition preſerved by order of ſucceſſion, viz. the myſtical interpretations of the ſcripture, which (he ſays) were delivered by the apoſtles to the governors of the church, and by them down from hand to hand. If this be the tradition Mr. S. contends

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tends for, Origen is at his ſervice; if it be not, I aſſure him he is not for his turn.

Next comes Tertullian, concerning whom (as alſo Origen) the papiſt upon occaſion thinks it enough to reply in St. Hierom's words*, "as for Tertullian, "I have nothing to ſay of him but that he is not "a man of the church." Whatever he was, theſe are his words, "if thou beeſt but a chriſtian, be- "lieve what is [*traditum*] delivered." And here's nothing again but the word delivered; which (as I have ſaid) is indifferent to written or oral tradition, if the circumſtances do not determine it to one; as here they do (very unluckily for Mr. S.) to the ſcripture. For he diſputes here againſt Marcion, who denied the fleſh of CHRIST; and who to maintain that, denied his nativity, and * expunged the whole hiſtory of it out of the goſpel; "but (ſaith "Tertullian) by what authority doſt thou this? "if thou be a prophet, foretel ſomething; if an "apoſtle, preach publickly; if apoſtolical, be of "the apoſtle's mind; if no more but a chriſtian, "believe what is delivered." And where delivered? but in thoſe inſtruments or books of the goſpel, out of which (as Tertullian immediately before tells us) Marcion had made bold to expunge this ſtory.

* Adverſ. Helvid.

* His opinor conſiliis tot originalia inſtrumenta Chriſti delere Marcion auſus eſt ne caro ejus probaretur. Ex qua, oro te, autoritate, &c.

As for his teſtimonies out of Athanaſius, the two firſt of them prove nothing, "but that faith comes "down from our anceſtors, or was by them de- "livered to us;" which no body denies: nor is there a word in either of them concerning oral, in oppoſition to written tradition. The third teſtimony is out of an epiſtle to Epictetus, to whom Athanaſius writing concerning thoſe who held CHRIST's body

body to be consubstantial with his divinity, tells him this was so gross a conceit, that it needed no solicitous confutation; but that it would be a sufficient answer to say in general, "the orthodox church was "not of that mind, our fathers did not think so." From whence Mr. S. infers, "that tradition is held "by him a sole sufficient rule of faith, and the "only answer to be given why we reject points from "faith, &c." But if he had consulted the book, he would not have inferred that this was the only answer to be given, &c. For it immediately follows, "but lest from our being wholly silent, the in-"ventors of evil things should take occasion to be "more impudent, it will be good to recite a few "passages out of scripture, &c," And from thence he confutes them at large. It was so gross an error, that he thought it might be sufficient, without bringing particular arguments out of scripture against it, to say that it was contrary to the ancient faith; but yet lest they should (if he had said no more) have taken boldness from thence, and thought that nothing more could be said against it, therefore he confutes it from particular texts of scripture. And what in his opinion was the sufficient rule of faith, Mr. S. might have seen at the beginning of this epistle, from these words, "that faith which was "professed by the fathers in that council (viz. the "Nicene) according to the scriptures, is to me suf-"ficient, &c." It seems that scripure was to him the rule and standard whereby to judge even the creeds of general councils.

SECT. I.

Mr. S. says he, will be shorter in the rest, and so will I. For what is to be said to testimonies brought

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at a venture? when he that brings them, had he read the books themſelves, could not have had the face to have brought them. Such is this out of

*Stromat. l. 7.

* Clem. Alexand. " as if one of a man becomes a " beaſt, like thoſe infected with Circe's poiſon; ſo " he hath forfeited his being a man of GOD and " faithful to our LORD, who ſpurns againſt eccleſia- " ſtical tradition, and leaps into opinions of hu- " mane election." Mr. S. knows whoſe way of quoting this is, to pick a bit out of the midſt of a text that ſounds ſomething towards his purpoſe, and leave out the reſt which would make it evident to be meant juſt contrary. Yet I cannot charge this wholly upon Mr. S. whoſe implicit faith were it not for his culpable ignorance might excuſe him. But for his ſeducer Mr. White, how he can acquit himſelf of ſo foul an imputation, I leave it to any ingenuous papiſt to judge, when I have nakedly ſet the whole paſſage before him. Clement ſpeaking of hereticks who relinquiſh the ſcripture, or abuſe it by wreſting it to their luſts, ſays, " men who deal in matters of higheſt importance, " muſt need commit great errors, if they do not " take and hold the RULE of FAITH from " truth itſelf. For ſuch men having once deviated " from the right way, do likewiſe err in moſt parti- " culars; probably becauſe they have not the facul- " ty of diſtinguiſhing truths and falſhoods, perfect- " ly exerciſed, to chooſe what ought to be choſen. " For if they had this, they would be ruled by the " divine SCRIPTURES. [Therefore as if any " of mankind ſhould become a beaſt in ſuch ſort as " thoſe who were * bewitched by Circe; even ſo he " hath

* φαρμακοθέντων.

" hath loſt his being a man of GOD and abiding " faithful to the LORD, who hath ſpurned againſt " the tradition of the church, and skipp'd into the " opinions of humane ſects *,] (not of humane elec- " tion, as Mr. S. blindly following Mr. White does " moſt abſurdly tranſlate it) but he that hath re- " turned from his errors, and hearkened to the " SCRIPTURES, and conformed his life to the " truth, is as it were advanced from a man to a GOD." SECT. I.

* αἱρέσεων.

At the ſame rate he goes on for ſeveral pages together, taking the ſcriptures for an indemonſtrable principle, from which all divine doctrines are to be demonſtrated, and for the criterion whereby they are to be tried, and charges the hereticks in ſuch words as we cannot find fitter for adverſaries, " as " (ſays he) naughty boys ſhut out their ſchoolmaſ- " ter, ſo theſe drive the propheſies out of the church, " ſuſpecting that they will chide and admoniſh " them; and they patch together abundance of falſ- " hoods and fictions that they may ſeem RATIO- " NALLY not to admit the ſcriptures." Again, ſpeaking of thoſe hereticks affronting the ſcripture, he tells us, " they oppoſe the * divine tradition with " humane doctrines, † by other traditions [delivered " from hand to hand] that they may eſtabliſh a ſect " or hereſy." Again, he ſays, " they adulterate the " truth, and ſteal the rule of faith, &c. but for " ORAL frauds they ſhall have WRITTEN " puniſhments." But enough of this; whoſoever deſires to ſee more of it, let him read on where theſe men to their own ſhame have directed us, and ſee whether any proteſtant can ſpeak more fully and plainly in this controverſy. The whole truſt of the

* Θεία παράδοσις.

† Διὰ ἑτέρων παραδόσεων.

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papiſts is upon the equivocal ſenſe of the word tradition. Which word is commonly uſed by the fathers to ſignify to us the ſcripture or divine tradition, as Clement here calls it; but the papiſts underſtand it of their unwritten tradition, and to this they apply all thoſe paſſages in the fathers where tradition is honourably mentioned. So Mr. S. deals with us in the teſtimonies I have already examined: and there is nothing of argument in thoſe few which remain, but from the ambiguity of this word; which I need not ſhew of every one of them in particular, for whoſoever ſhall read them with this key will find that they are of no force to conclude what he drives at.

§ 5. As for his citations out of the council of Trent, by which he would prove it to be the perſuaſion of their preſent church, that tradition is the ſole rule of faith; I have already ſhewn that that council hath declared otherwiſe, and is otherwiſe underſtood by the chief of their own writers. And therefore he did prudently to conceal in an &c. thoſe choking words, in which the council declares itſelf "to receive and honour, with equal pious "affection and reverence, the books of ſcripture "and unwritten traditions." And after a deal of ſhuffling, what a pitiful account is it that he at laſt gives of that council's putting ſcripture conſtantly before tradition, becauſe ſcripture being interpreted by tradition, is of the ſame authority "as "if an apoſtle or an evangeliſt were preſent, and "therefore no wonder they honour ſcripture-teſti-"mony ſo as to put it before tradition;" which is to ſay, that becauſe ſcripture is ſubordinate to tradition,

dition, and to be regulated by it, therefore it deſerves to be put before it. Beſides, if ſcripture and tradition be but ſeveral ways of conveying the evangelical and apoſtolical doctrine, why ſhould he imagine an evangeliſt or apoſtle to be more preſent by the ſcripture than by oral tradition? eſpecially if it be conſidered, that he ſuppoſes ſcripture to be an uncertain, and tradition an infallible way of conveying this doctrine. SECT. II.

SECT. II.

§ 1. ALL that now remains, is to confirm the precedent diſcourſe by teſtimonies of the moſt eminent perſons of the church, in ſeveral ages; in which I ſhall not need to be large, being ſo happily prevented by that full account which is given of the ſenſe of the ancients in this matter, in the anſwer to *Labyrinthus Cantuarienſis*; which Mr. S. may if he pleaſe conſult for his farther conviction. Teſtimonies on the behalf of ſcripture.

§ 2. I begin with the hiſtorical account which Euſebius gives of committing the goſpel to writing; which is to this purpoſe, viz. " * that the Romans " were not content with the doctrine preached, " unleſs it were alſo committed to writing; and " therefore did earneſtly beg of Mark, Peter's " companion, that he would leave them a monu- " ment in writing of that doctrine which had been " delivered to them by word of mouth. And this " was the occaſion of the writing of St. Mark's " goſpel. And when Peter did underſtand that this " work was publiſh'd (being ſuggeſted by the di- * Hiſtor. eccleſ. l. 2. c. 14.

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" vine revelation of the HOLY SPIRIT) it is said " he was very much pleased with the ready and " earnest desire of those persons; and that by his " authority he confirmed this writing, to the end " that it might be every where read in the church."

As for St. Matthew and St. John, he tells us,

* Ibid. l. 3. c. 18. " * that of all the disciples, they two only have left " monuments in writing; of whom it is also report- " ted that they betook themselves to write, being " drawn thereto by necessity. Matthew, after he " had preached the word of GOD to the jews, and " was resolved to go to other nations, wrote his " gospel in the language of his country; and thus " by the diligence and pains of writing, did abun- " dantly supply the want of his presence to those " whom he left. And when Mark and Luke had " publish'd their gospel, it is reported that John " (who had always used to preach the word with- " out writing it) being at length wrought upon by " the same reason did betake himself to write."

From this account it is clear, that the apostles thought it necessary, for the preservation and secure conveyance of the christian doctrine, that it should be put into writing; and that they judged this a better way to supply the want of their presence than oral tradition. Therefore the same au-

* Ibid. c. 31. thor tells us*, " that the disciples, who immediate- " ly succeeded the apostles, as they travelled to " preach the gospel to those who had not yet heard " the word of faith, did with great care also de- " liver to them the writings of the holy evangelists."

* Ibid. c. 30. Again, " * that Ignatius as he travelled towards " Rome (where he was to suffer) exhorted the " churches

" churches of every city to hold fast the tradition " of the apostles; which (as also by writing he tes- " tified) for the greater security he held necessary to " be copied in writing." SECT. II.

§ 4. That the hereticks of old made the same " pretence which the papists make now, of oral tradition in opposition to scripture, the same Eusebius tells us; and withal, that books are a sufficient confutation of this pretence. " * Those (says he) who " were of the heresy of Artemon, said that all their " forefathers and the apostles themselves had re- " ceived and taught the same things which they " also did, and had preserved the true teaching un- " to the time of Victor bishop of Rome, whose suc- " cessor Zephyrinus corrupted it. And this (saith " he) would have great probability, were it not first " of all contradicted by the scripture; and next, if " there did not remain the writings of other bre- " thren much more ancient than Victor's time, " &c. in the books of all whom CHRIST's divini- " ty is acknowledged." And afterwards he tells us, that these hereticks did change and corrupt the scriptures to bring them to their opinions; so Mr. S. tells us, " that the outward letter of scripture ought " to be corrected by tradition and sense written in " mens hearts." * Ibid. l. 5. c. 27.

St. Hierom also tells us, " * that the hereticks " were wont to say, we are the sons of the wise, " who did from the beginning deliver down to " us the apostolical doctrine;" but he adds, " that " the true sons of Judah adhere to the scrip- " ture." * Com. in Isa. c. 19.

§ 4. That

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§ 4. That ſcripture is ſufficiently plain in all things neceſſary.

St. Chryſoſtom, "* all things in the divine ſcrip-
* In 2 Theſ. c. 2. hom. 4. "tures are plain and ſtraight. Whatſoever things
"are neceſſary are manifeſt."

St. Auſtin having ſpoken of the profoundneſs of
* Epiſt. 3. ſcripture, adds, "not that thoſe things which are ne-
"ceſſary to ſalvation are ſo hard to be come at:
"but (ſaith he) when one hath there attained faith,
"without which there is no pious and right living,
"there are beſides many dark and myſterious things,
* Ibid. "&c." Again *, "the manner of ſpeech in ſcrip-
"ture how eaſy is it to all, though few can pene-
"trate to the bottom of it? thoſe things which
"it plainly contains, it ſpeaks without diſguiſe
"like a familiar friend to the heart of the learned
"and unlearned." How will Mr. S. reconcile this with his great exception againſt ſcripture? And what theſe things are, which are plainly contained in ſcripture, the ſame father tells us
* De doctr. Chriſt. l. 3. c. 9. elſewhere, in theſe words, "* among thoſe things
"which are plainly ſet down in ſcripture, all
"thoſe things are to be found which comprehend
"faith and good manners." The ſame St. Auſtin (as alſo Clement in the book which Mr. White quoted) for the underſtanding of obſcure texts of ſcripture, directs us not to tradition, but to the
* De unitate eccleſ. c. 5. plain text, without which he expreſly ſays, "* there
"would be no way to underſtand them."

§ 5. That ſcripture is ſo plain, as to be fit to determine controverſies.

Juſtin ſure thought ſo, when diſputing with Trypho, concerning a point wherein the Jew had tradition

tradition on his ſide, he told him "he would "bring ſuch proofs (to the contrary) as no man "could gainſay: attend (ſays he) to what I ſhall "recite out of the holy ſcriptures, proofs which "need not to be explained, but only to be heard." Mr. White might have found likewiſe much to this purpoſe in his Clement. SECT. II.

But not to tire my reader in a point which the ancients abound with, I ſhall only produce the judgment of Conſtantine * in that ſolemn oration of his to the council of Nice, wherein he bewails "their mutual oppoſitions, eſpecially in "divine things;" concerning which they had the doctrine of the HOLY SPIRIT recorded in writing; "for (ſays he) the books of the evan-"geliſts and apoſtles, and the oracles of the old "prophets, do evidently teach us what we ought "to think of the divine majeſty. Therefore laying "aſide all ſeditious contention, let us determine the "matters in queſtion by teſtimonies out of the di-"vine writings." Not a word of any other tradition but ſcripture, which was held evident enough in thoſe days, though now Mr. S. tells us it is not ſufficient to decide that controverſy about the divinity of CHRIST.

* Theodoret. hiſt. l. 1. c. 7.

§ 6. Laſtly, that ſcripture is the rule of faith.

Irenæus: "* the method of our ſalvation we "have not known by any other but thoſe men "by whom the goſpel came to us, which then "they preached, but afterwards by the will of "GOD delivered it to us in the ſcriptures, to be "for the future the foundation and pillar of our "faith."

* L. 3. 1.

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St. Cyprian, the church hath ever held a good catholick; yet Mr. S. * takes notice that he erred in a point of faith; and perhaps the rather, becauſe Mr. Ruſhworth † had told him that he was not theirs in this controverſy. "For (ſays he) St. Cyprian "ſeems to think that the reſolution of faith was to "be made into ſcripture, and not into tradition." But that we may not ſeem to accept of this courteſy from him, nor yet wholly to deſpiſe it, I ſhall offer this one teſtimony inſtead of many out of that father; who being oppoſed with an argument from tradition, demands, "* whence have you that "tradition? comes it from the authority of the "LORD, and of the goſpel, or from the epiſtles "of the apoſtles? For GOD teſtifies that we are to "do thoſe things which are written, &c. If it be "commanded in the goſpel, or contained in the "epiſtles or acts of the apoſtles, then let us obſerve "it as a divine and holy tradition."

* P. 314.

† Dial. 3 ſect. 13.

*Epiſt. 74.

Hilary * commends Conſtantius the emperor "for "regulating the faith only according to thoſe things "which are written." And to oblige him to deſerve this commendation, he adds, "he who re-"fuſes this is antichriſt, and who diſſembles in it "is anathema."

* Ad Conſtant.

Optatus *, concerning the controverſy with the donatiſts, asks who ſhall be judge? and anſwers himſelf, "the ſcriptures:" which he illuſtrates by the ſimilitude of a father who delivered his will orally to his children while he was living, but when he was dying, cauſed it to be written in laſting tables, to decide all controverſies that might happen

* Lib. 5. de ſchiſm. Donat.

pen among them after his death. The paſſage is large, and it is obvious to apply it. SECT. II.

Baſil maintaining the doxology as it was uſed in his days, ſays, " * thus we received it from our fa- " thers ;" but adds immediately, " this is not " enough for us, that it is the tradition of the fa- " thers, for they followed the authority of the " ſcriptures, making its teſtimonies the principles " upon which they built." He has indeed in the ſame book * a paſſage much inſiſted on by the pa- piſts concerning unwritten traditions ; but withal, he ſays thoſe traditions were ſecretly conveyed, which makes all the reſt of no uſe to Mr. S.

* De Sp. Sancto, c. 7.

* C. 27.

Chryſoſtom * having mentioned ſeveral hereſies, directs how they may be avoided, viz. " by attend- " ing to the faith delivered, and looking upon all " that diſagrees from that as adulterate. For (ſays " he) as thoſe who give rules do not put men up- " on a curious enquiry after any meaſures, but bid " them keep to the rule given ; ſo it is in opini- " ons. But no body will attend to the ſcriptures ; " if we did, we ſhould not only not fall into errors " ourſelves, but alſo reſcue thoſe that are deceived." Again, " * if we would be throughly converſant in " the ſcriptures, we ſhould be inſtructed both in " right opinions and a good life." Again, " among " the many ſects of chriſtians * it will be eaſy to " judge of the right, if we believe the ſcriptures, " becauſe they are plain and true : if any one agree " with theſe he is a chriſtian ; if he contradicts " them he is far from this rule."

* Hom. 8. in epiſt. ad Heb. c. 5.

* Hom. 52. in Joh.

* Hom. 33. in act. apoſt.

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St. Auſtin calls the ſcripture, * the divine balance for the weighing of doctrines. Again, "the "holy ſcripture (ſays he) fixeth the rule of our "doctrine." And accordingly himſelf uſes it both in his diſpute with Maximinus, to whom he ſays, "* Neither ought I now to alledge the Nicene "council, nor thou that of *Ariminum*: for neither "am I bound to the authority of the one, nor thou "of the other. Let us both conteſt with the au- "thorities of ſcripture, which are witneſſes com- "mon to us both." And alſo againſt the donatiſts in theſe words: "* let them, if they can, "demonſtrate their church not by the talk and ru- "mours [or oral tradition] of the Africans, not "by the councils of their own biſhops, not by "the books of their diſputers, not by deceitful mi- "racles, &c. but by the preſcript of the law, pro- "phets, &c. i. e. by all the canonical authorities of "the holy books."

* De Bapt. cont. donat. l. 2. c. 6.

* Contr. Max. l. 3.

* De unitat. eccleſ. c. 16.

Hierom ſaith, "of thoſe things, which without "the authorities and teſtimonies of the ſcripture, "men invent of their own heads as from apoſto- "lical tradition, they are ſmitten with the ſword "of GOD."

* Comment. in Agg. c. 1.

Theophilus Alexander whom Hierom hath tranſlated, calls ſcripture more than once * the rule, and the teſtimonies of it the firm foundations of doctrine. And again ſaith, "† It comes from a de- "moniacal ſpirit that men follow the ſophiſms of "humane minds, and think any thing divine that "wants the authority of ſcripture."

* Paſchal. l. 3.

† L. 3.

Theodoret * charges all hereſies upon the not following of ſcripture, which he calls "the in- "flexible

* Hæret. fabul. l. 5.

" flexible rule of truth. " Again, " we have learned " the rule of opinion from the divine ſcripture." SECT. II.

After the fathers, I ſhall produce the teſtimonies of two eminent perſons of latter times, Gerſon and Lyra.

Gerſon in his * book of the trial of doctrines, hath this remarkable paſſage; " in the trial of " doctrines, that which is firſt and principally to " be conſidered, is, whether a doctrine be confor- " mable to the holy ſcripture, &c. The reaſon of " this is, becauſe the ſcripture is delivered to us as a " SUFFICIENT and INFALLIBLE RULE for " the government of the whole eccleſiaſtical body and " its members to the end of the world. So that " it is ſuch an art, ſuch a rule or exemplar, that " any other doctrine which is not conformable " to it, is to be renounced as heretical, or to be " accounted ſuſpicious, or not at all appertain- " ing to religion." Again, " * it is evident how " pernicious the rejection of the holy ſcripture is, " and how certain a preparatory for the reception of " antichriſt." Once more, " † what miſchief, what " danger, what confuſion hath happened through " contempt of the holy ſcripture, which ſure is " ſufficient for the government of the church (elſe " CHRIST muſt have been an imperfect lawgiver) " let us ask experience, &c."

* Part 1. Conſid. 2.

* De diſtinct. verar. viſion. à falſis.

† Serm. in die circumcif. &c.

Lyra alſo writes thus; " * as in philoſophy truth " is diſcovered by reducing things to their firſt and " ſelf-evident principles; ſo in the writings deli- " vered by the holy doctors, truth is diſcovered, as " to matters of faith, by reducing them to the ca- " nonical ſcriptures."

* Prolog. de lib. bib. &c.

Sir,

PART. IV.

Sir, " you know how eaſy it were to ſwell up a " large volume with teſtimonies to this pur- " poſe; eſpecially if I ſhould take the courſe " that Mr. White does, to hale in quotations " though ever ſo impertinent; or uſe the wretch- " ed importunity which Mr. S. does, to per- " ſuade them to be pertinent. But theſe teſti- " monies which I have nakedly ſet down, leav- " ing them to ſpeak for themſelves, are enough " to ſatisfy an unpaſſionate reader, ſuch an one as " dares truſt himſelf with the uſe of own eyes and " reaſon. As for that ſort of men which chooſe " to follow noiſe rather than light, we muſt be " content to leave them to the blind conduct of " thoſe guides, who having no better means to " keep their followers to them, go hallowing in " the dark, and fill their ears with the inſignifi- " cant ſounds of infallibility, indefectibility, ſelf- " evidence and demonſtration."

" Concerning the appendix wherein you are par- " ticularly challeng'd, I hope for an account very " ſhortly, and ſo take leave."

Sir,

Your affectionate friend,

JOHN TILLOTSON.

OF

SINCERITY *and* CONSTANCY

IN THE

Faith and *Profession*

OF THE

TRUE RELIGION.

TO HIS

SACRED MAJESTY,

KING *WILLIAM*,

THESE

SERMONS

ARE

Most humbly Dedicated,

By the Author's Relict,

Elizabeth Tillotson.

THE PUBLISHER TO THE READER.

THE AUTHOR *of these sermons was so well known, particularly for his most excellent and useful discourses from the pulpit, that I shall not attempt, by any thing I can say, to recommend them to the publick. I know very well, they have already that credit in the world, which will render any apology needless; especially when, by this publication of them, they shall speak for themselves.*

I think it requisite, only to assure the reader, that they are what they

pretend to be, the genuine works of that great man.

Whilſt I had the happineſs of converſing with him, he was pleas'd (at my requeſt) to inſtruct me in the character *in which he wrote all his ſermons: and ſome of theſe now publiſhed, having been tranſcribed by me ſome years ſince, were found amongſt his papers, corrected with his own hand.*

By what he had been pleas'd to ſay, that I was maſter of his character, *and by the few* errata *he obſerv'd in my firſt performance, I was encouraged to ſet about this work; in which I can ſolemnly profeſs, that I have obſerv'd a religious care and ſtrictneſs, neither to omit nor add any thing, but an* of, *a* the, *or the like, when the ſenſe plainly required it; and of that too I have given notice, by affixing this mark* [“] *upon the word which*

I did

I did not find in the original; so that the reader is left to judge of the fitness of such additions; which, after all, are so very few and inconsiderable, as scarcely to deserve this notice; only that he might be satisfied (in case the printer do his part) that he hath here, what he expects, a perfect transcript of these sermons; *and in them a true and lively strain of* christian piety and eloquence, *so fitted to all capacities, that I cannot but hope, all that shall read them will be the better for them, even those not excepted (if there be any such) who may have entertain'd any unreasonable prejudices against them, or their* most reverend author.

I have always thought, and often said it, that if any were leaven'd with prejudice against him, they were, to be sure, such as did not know him; and the

the farther I go in his writings, the more I am assur'd, that it must be so. But because the sermons themselves, to which I refer, are not yet all of them published, I must leave this to the judgment of the impartial reader, when the whole shall be finish'd, which is design'd with all convenient speed.

Lambeth,
April 2, 1695.

Ra. Barker.

SER-

SERMON LV.

Of ſincerity towards GOD and man.

JOHN i. 47.

Jeſus ſaw Nathanael coming to him, and ſaith of him, behold an Iſraelite indeed, in whom is no guile.

SERM. LV.

Preach'd at Kingſton, July 29, 1694. the laſt his grace preach'd.

WHO this Nathanael was, upon whom our SAVIOUR beſtows this extraordinary character, doth not certainly appear, his name being but once more mentioned in the whole hiſtory of the goſpel: for certain, he was a good man, who deſerved this extraordinary commendation; and none but our SAVIOUR, "who knew what "was in man, and needed not that any ſhould tell "him," could have given it, eſpecially of one whom he had never ſeen before that time; for when "JE-"SUS ſaw him coming to him, he ſaith of him, "behold an Iſraelite indeed."

The whole nation of the Jews were Iſraelites by natural deſcent, being the ſeed of Jacob or Iſrael; but in a ſpecial and more excellent ſenſe, none are eſteem'd the true poſterity of Iſrael, but thoſe who reſembled this father of their nation, in true piety and goodneſs; for (as the apoſtle reaſons) "they "are not all Iſrael, who are of Iſrael;" they only are Iſraelites indeed who reſemble good old Jacob in the ſincerity of his piety, and the ſimplicity of his temper and diſpoſition; for our SAVIOUR

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SERM. LV.

ſeems here to allude to that character which is given of Jacob (Gen. xxv. 27.) "That he was a plain "man, or, as the hebrew word ſignifies, a perfect and "ſincere man," in oppoſition to his brother Eſau who is ſaid to be cunning, ſo that to be an Iſraelite indeed, is to be a downright honeſt man, without fraud and guile, without any arts of hypocriſy and deceit.

In ſpeaking of this virtue of ſincerity, which is the higheſt character and commendation of a good man, I ſhall conſider it, as it reſpects GOD and man. As it reſpects GOD, ſo it imports the truth and ſincerity of our piety and devotion towards him. As it regards men, ſo it ſignifies a ſimplicity of mind and manners, in our carriage and converſation, one towards another: both theſe are included, and very probably were intended, in the character which our SAVIOUR here gives Nathanael.

I. I ſhall conſider this grace, or virtue of ſincerity, as it reſpects GOD, and ſo it imports the truth and ſincerity of our piety towards him, that we heartily believe, and fear, and honour him, and that the outward expreſſions of our piety and obedience to him are the genuine iſſue of our inward apprehenſions of him, and affections towards him; and this no doubt, our SAVIOUR intended, in the firſt place, in the character of this good man, that he was a man of a real and ſubſtantial and unaffected piety, and in truth, what he appeared to be; that he did ſincerely love GOD and his truth, and was ready to embrace it, whenever it was fairly propoſed to him, as did plainly appear in his carriage towards our SAVIOUR; for when Philip invited him "to come

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"and see him," he did not conceal the prejudice and objection he had against him, grounded upon a common, but uncharitable proverb, "that out of "Nazareth ariseth no prophet;" but having an honest and sincere mind, he was not so carried away by a popular prejudice, as not to have patience to be better inform'd, and therefore was easily persuaded to go and see our SAVIOUR, and to discourse with him himself, and being satisfied that he was the MESSIAS, he presently owns him for such, calling him "the SON of GOD, and the king of Is-"rael." And because sincerity is the very heart and substance of religion, it concerns us not only to endeavour after this temper and disposition, but to enquire into the nature and properties of it, that we may know when we have it, and may have the comfort of it. I shall mention five or six properties of a sincere piety, by which men may sufficiently know the integrity of their hearts towards GOD.

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1. Our piety is then sincere, when the chief reasons and predominant motives of it are religious; and I call that a religious or rational motive, which regards GOD and another world, in opposition to men, and to our present temporal advantages; when the principal and swaying motives of our piety, are a sense of GOD's authority over us, and of our duty and obligation to him; a fear of his displeasure and threatnings, and the hopes of the glorious reward which he hath promised to obedience; these motives are properly religious, because they respect GOD, and are the arguments to obedience, which he himself offers to us, to persuade us

7.

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to our duty; and that is a sincere piety, which is wrought in us by these considerations, how unequally soever mixed, for even in the most of men, fear does many times prevail more than love, and, in case of great temptation, may preserve men from sin, when perhaps no other consideration will do it. On the contrary, that is an unsincere piety, to which we are moved meerly by the regard of men, and the consideration of some temporal advantages. And when these have the chief influence upon us, it is easy for any man to discern in himself; for he that will carefully observe himself, can hardly be ignorant of the true spring and motive of his own actions: but there is one sign whereby a man may certainly know that his heart is not right towards GOD, and that is, if when these motives are absent, our piety and zeal for the true religion doth either cease, or is sensibly cooled and abated; as if impiety, or popery, or any thing else that is bad, begin to be in fashion, and to have the countenance of great examples; if those whom we fear, and upon whom we depend, do discover any inclination that way; if the garb of religion cease to be for our interest, or, in the revolution of things, happen to be contrary to it: if in any of these cases, we let fall the profession of our religion, or neglect the practice of it, this is a plain and undeniable demonstration of the insincerity of our former piety.

2. A sincere piety must be rooted in the heart, and be a living principle within us: for as the apostle reasons in another case, "he is not a Jew who is "one outwardly, but he who is one inwardly, and

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" in the heart;" and without this all outward acts " of piety and devotion are hypocrisy; a picture of " religion, and a form of godliness, without the life " and power of it." SERM. LV.

3. A third evidence of a sincere piety is, when men are religious in private and in secret, as well as in publick and in the open view of men. He is truly devout, who is so in his family, and in his closet, where he hath no witness, but GOD, and his own soul, as well as in the church. He is a downright honest man, who will make good his word, and perform his promise, when no proof can be made of it, and no law compel him to it, as readily as if there had been an hundred witnesses of it. He is sincerely just, who will not detain from another his right, though he be ignorant of it; nor wrong any man, though he could do it with all the secrecy and safety in the world; who will not impose upon another's ignorance or unskilfulness, though never so much to his own benefit or advantage: he is truly charitable, who would not only as soon, but rather sooner give his alms in secret, than in the sight of men: and he is truly grateful, who when there is occasion and opportunity, will acknowledge a kindness and requite a benefit to the relations of his deceased friend, though he be sure that all memory of the obligation died with him, and that none are conscious of it, but GOD and his own conscience. And indeed there is scarce any act of piety and virtue, the sincerity of which may not by this evidence be known by us: as on the contrary a man may for certain conclude himself a hypocrite, if he be not the same in the presence of

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GOD, and his own conſcience, that he is in the ſight of men.

4. Another evidence of a ſincere piety is a conſtant tenour of goodneſs in the general courſe of our lives. I do not now ſpeak of the firſt beginnings of piety, in new converts, which are many times very imperfect, and ſuch as afford little or no evidence of a man's ſincerity; but in thoſe who have made any conſiderable progreſs in goodneſs; the habits of any known ſin, and the wilful and deliberate neglect of our duties, and even the ſingle acts of more heinous crimes, will bring in queſtion our ſincerity, and are by no means to be ſhelter'd under the name of infirmity: for theſe the grace of GOD, if we be not wanting to ourſelves, will enable us to ſubdue; and he is not ſincerely good, who doth not ſeriouſly endeavour to be as good as he can, and does not make uſe of that grace which GOD is ready to afford to all the purpoſes, tho' not of a perfect, yet of a ſincere obedience to the laws of GOD.

5. Another evidence of a ſincere piety is, that our obedience to GOD be uniform and univerſal, equally reſpecting all the laws of GOD, and every part of our duty; that it do not content itſelf with an eſpecial regard to ſome precepts of the law tho' never ſo conſiderable, and allow itſelf in the breach, or neglect of the reſt; no nor with obſerving the duties of one table of the law, if it overlook the other; no nor with obedience to all the commandments of GOD, one only excepted. St. James puts this caſe, and determines, "that he that keeps the "whole law, ſaving that he offends in one point, is "guilty of all," that is, is not ſincere in his obedience

dience to the reſt. And therefore we muſt take great heed that we do not ſet the commandments of GOD at odds, and daſh the two tables of the law againſt one another, leſt, as St. James ſays, "we "break the whole law." And yet I fear this is too common a fault, even amongſt thoſe who make a great profeſſion of piety, that they are not ſufficiently ſenſible of the obligation and neceſſity of the duties of the ſecond table, and of the excellency of thoſe graces and virtues, which reſpect our carriage and converſation with one another. Men do not ſeem to conſider, that GOD did not give laws to us, for his own ſake, but ours; and therefore that he did not only deſign that we ſhould honour him, but that we ſhould be happy in one another; for which reaſon he joins with our humble and dutiful deportment towards himſelf, the offices of juſtice and charity towards others, Micah vi. 8. "he hath "ſhewed thee, O man, what is good; and what "doth the LORD require of thee, but to do juſtice, "and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy "GOD?" And 1 John iv. 21. "This command-"ment have we from him, that he who loveth "GOD, love his brother alſo." And yet it is too viſible that many, who make a great profeſſion of piety towards GOD, are very defective in moral duties; very unpeaceable, and turbulent in their ſpirits, very peeviſh and paſſionate, very conceited and cenſorious, as if their profeſſion of godlineſs did exempt them from the care and practice of chriſtian virtues. But we muſt not ſo fix our eye upon heaven, as to forget that we walk upon the earth, and to neglect the ordering of our ſteps

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and conversation among men, lest while we are gazing upon the stars, we fall into the ditch of gross and foul immorality.

It is very possible, that men may be devout and zealous in religion, very nice and scrupulous about the worship and service of GOD; and yet because of their palpable defect in points of justice and honesty, of meekness and humility, of peace and charity, may be gross and odious hypocrites. For men must not think for some acts, either of outward or inward piety, to compound with GOD for the neglect of mercy and judgment, or to demand it as a right from men to be excused from the great duties and virtues of humane conversation; or pretend to be above them, because they relate chiefly to this world, and to the temporal happiness of men; as if it were the privilege of great devotion, to give a licence to men to be peevish and froward, sour and morose, supercilious and censorious in their behaviour towards others. Men must have a great care that they be not intent upon the outward parts of religion, to the prejudice of inward and real goodness, and that they do not so use the means of religion, as to neglect and lose the main end of it: that they do not place all religion in fasting and outward mortification: for though these things be very useful and necessary in their place, if they be discreetly managed, and made subservient to the great ends of religion; yet it is often seen that men have so unequal a respect to the several parts of their duty, that fasting and corporal severity, those meager and lean duties of piety, in comparison, do like Pharaoh's lean kine, "devour and eat up almost

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"all the goodly and well-favoured," the great and substantial duties of the christian life; and therefore men must take great heed, lest whilst they are so intent upon mortifying themselves, they do not mortify virtue and good-nature, humility and meekness and charity, things highly valuable in themselves, and amiable in the eyes of men, and in the sight of GOD of great price. SERM. LV.

For the neglect of the moral duties of the second table is not only a mighty scandal to religion, but of pernicious consequence many other ways. A fierce and ill-governed, an ignorant and injudicious zeal for the honour of GOD, and something or other belonging necessarily, as they think, to his true worship and service, hath made many men do many unreasonable, immoral and impious things, of which history will furnish us with innumerable instances, in the practice of the jesuits and other zealots of the church of Rome; and there are not wanting too many examples of this kind amongst ourselves: for men that are not sober, and considerate in their religion, but give themselves up to the conduct of blind prejudice, and furious zeal, do easily persuade themselves that any thing is lawful, which they strongly fancy to tend to the honour of GOD, and to the advancement of the cause of religion. Hence some have proceeded to that height of absurdity, in their zeal for their religion and church, as to think it not only lawful but highly commendable and meritorious to equivocate upon oaths and break faith with hereticks, and to destroy all those that differ from them; as if it were piety in some cases to lie for the truth, and to kill men for GOD's sake.

So

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So that if we would approve the integrity of our hearts to God, and evidence to ourselves the sincerity of our obedience, we ought impartially to regard all the laws of GOD, and every part of our duty: and if we do not, our heart is not upright with GOD. 'Tis observable that sincerity in scripture is often called by the name of integrity, and perfection, because it is integrated and made up of all the parts of our duty.

6. The last evidence I shall mention of the sincerity of our religion is, if it hold out against persecution, and endure the fiery trial. This is the utmost proof of our integrity, when we are called to bear the cross, to be willing then to expose all our worldly interest, and even life itself, for the cause of GOD and religion. This is a trial which GOD doth not always call his faithful servants to; but they are always to be prepared for it, in the purpose and resolution of their minds. This our SAVIOUR makes the great mark of a true disciple, "if any man (saith he) will be my disciple, let "him deny himself, and take up his cross, and "follow me." This is a certain sign, "that men "have received the word into good ground," and are well-rooted in their religion, when they are not shaken by these fierce assaults; "for ma-"ny (as our SAVIOUR tells us) hear the word, and "with joy receive it; but having not root in "themselves, they endure but for a while, and "when persecution or tribulation ariseth, because of "the word, presently they are offended;" nay some, when they see persecution coming at a distance, wheel off and bethink themselves of making their retreat

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in time, and "of agreeing with their adversary, "whilst he is yet in the way." SERM. LV.

So that constancy to our religion in case of danger, and suffering for it, is the best proof of our sincerity. This is the fiery trial, as the scripture calls it, which will try what materials we are made of, and whether we love GOD and his truth in sincerity.

And thus I have considered sincerity as it respects GOD, and imports true piety and religion towards him; and I proceed to the second consideration,

II. Of sincerity as it regards men; and so it signifies a simplicity of mind and manners in our conversation, and carriage one towards another; singleness of heart, discovering itself in a constant plainness and honest openness of behaviour, free from all insidious devices, and little tricks, and fetches of craft and cunning; from all false appearances and deceitful disguises of ourselves in word or action; or yet more plainly, it is to speak as we think, and do what we pretend and profess, to perform and make good what we promise, and, in a word, really to be, what we would seem and appear to be.

Not that we are obliged to tell every man all our mind; but we are never to declare any thing contrary to it: we may be silent, and conceal as much of ourselves, as prudence, or any other good reason requires; but we must not put on a disguise, and make a false appearance and empty shew of what we are not, either by word or action. Contrary to this virtue is (I fear) most of that com-

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compliment which is current in converſation, and which for the moſt part is nothing but words, to fill up the gaps, and ſupply the emptineſs of diſcourſe; and a pretence to that kindneſs and eſteem for perſons, which either in truth we have not, or not to that degree which our expreſſions ſeem to import; which if done with deſign, is that which we call flattery, a very odious ſort of inſincerity, and ſo much the worſe, becauſe it abuſes men into a vain and fooliſh opinion of themſelves, and an ill-grounded confidence of the kindneſs and good-will of others towards them; and ſo much the more dangerous, becauſe it hath a party within us, which is ready to let it in; it plays upon our ſelf-love, which greedily catcheth at any thing that tends to magnify and advance us; for GOD knows, we are all too apt to think and make the beſt of our bad ſelves, ſo that very few tempers have wiſdom and firmneſs enough to be proof againſt flattery; it requires great conſideration and a reſolute modeſty and humility, to reſiſt the inſinuations of this ſerpent; yea, a little rudeneſs and moroſeneſs of nature, a prudent diſtruſt and infidelity in mankind, to make a man in good earneſt to reject and deſpiſe it.

Now beſides, that all hypocriſy and inſincerity is mean in itſelf, having falſhood at the bottom; it is alſo often made uſe of, to the prejudice of others, in their rights and intereſts. For not only diſſimulation is contrary to ſincerity, becauſe it conſiſts in a vain ſhew of what we are not, in a falſe muſter of our virtues and good qualities, in a deceitful repreſentation and undue character of our lives: but there are likewiſe other qualities and actions more in-

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conſiſtent with integrity, which are of a more injurious and miſchievous conſequence to our nature, as falſhood and fraud, and perfidiouſneſs, and infinite little crafts and arts of deceit, which men practiſe upon one another in their ordinary converſation and intercourſe. The former is great vanity: but this is groſs iniquity. SERM. LV.

And yet theſe qualities dexterouſly managed, ſo as not to lie too plain and open to diſcovery, are look'd upon by many, as ſigns of great depth and ſhrewdneſs, admirable inſtruments of buſineſs, and neceſſary means for the compaſſing our own ends and deſigns; and tho' in thoſe that have ſuffered by them, and felt the miſchief of them, they are always accounted diſhoneſt, yet among the generality of lookers on, they paſs for great policy; as if the very skill of governing and managing humane affairs, did conſiſt in theſe little tricks and devices: but he that looks more narrowly into them, and will but have the patience to obſerve the end of them, will find them to be great follies, and that it is only for want of true wiſdom and underſtanding, that men turn aſide to tricks, and make diſſimulation and lies their refuge. It is Solomon's obſervation, "that he that walketh uprightly, walketh ſurely; but the folly of fools is deceit." The folly of fools, that is, the moſt egregious piece of folly that any man can be guilty of, is to play the knave: the vulgar tranſlation renders this clauſe a little otherwiſe, but yet towards the ſame ſenſe, *ſed ſtultus divertit ad dolos*, "but the fool turns aſide to tricks;" to make uſe of theſe, is a ſign the man wants underſtanding to ſee the plain and direct way to his end. I will not deny but theſe

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little arts may serve a present turn, and perhaps successfully enough; but true wisdom goes deep, and reacheth a great way farther, looking to the end of things, and regarding the future as well as the present, and, by judging upon the whole matter and sum of affairs, doth clearly discern, that craft and cunning are only useful for the present occasion; whereas integrity is of a lasting use, and will be serviceable to us upon all occasions, and in the whole course of our lives; and that dissimulation and deceit, tho' they may do some present execution in business, yet they recoil upon a man terribly afterwards, so as to make him stagger, and by degrees to weaken, and at last to destroy his reputation, which is a much more useful and substantial and lasting instrument of prosperity and success in humane affairs than any tricks and devices whatsoever. Thus have I considered this great virtue of sincerity, both as it regards GOD, and the mutual conversation and intercourse of men one with another.

And now having explained the nature of sincerity to GOD and man, by declaring the properties of it, and in what instances we ought chiefly to practise it, and what things are contrary to it; that which remains, is to persuade men to endeavour after this excellent quality, and to practise it in all the words and actions of their lives.

Let us then, in the first place, be sincere in our religion, and serve GOD in truth and uprightness of heart, out of conscience of our duty and obligations to him, and not with sinister respects to our private interest or passion, to the publick approbation or censure of men. Let us never make use of religion

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gion to ſerve any baſe and unworthy ends, cloking our deſigns of covetouſneſs, or ambition, or revenge, with pretences of conſcience and zeal for GOD; and let us endeavour after the reality of religion, always remembring that a ſincere piety doth not conſiſt in ſhew, but ſubſtance, not in appearance, but in effect; that the ſpirit of true religion is ſtill and calm, charitable and peaceable, making as little ſhew and ſtir as is poſſible; that a truly and ſincerely good Man does not affect vain oſtentation, and an unſeaſonable diſcovery of his good qualities, but endeavours rather really to be, than to ſeem religious, and of the two rather ſeeks to conceal his piety, than to ſet it out with pomp; gives his alms privately; prays to GOD in ſecret, and makes no appearance of religion, but in ſuch fruits and effects as cannot be hid in the quiet and ſilent virtues of humility, and meekneſs, and patience, of peace and charity, in governing his paſſions, and taking heed not to offend with his tongue, by ſlander and calumny, by envious detraction or raſh cenſure, or by any word or action that may be to the hurt and prejudice of his neighbour: but, on the contrary, it is a very ill ſign, if a man affect to make a great noiſe and buſtle about religion; if he blow a trumpet before his good works, and by extraordinary ſhews of devotion ſummon the eyes of men to behold him, and do, as it were, call aloud to them to take notice of his piety, "and to come and "ſee his zeal for the LORD of hoſts." It is not impoſſible but ſuch a man, with all his vanity and oſtentation, may have ſome real goodneſs in him; but he is as the hypocrites are, and does as like one

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one as is possible; and by the mighty shew that he makes, to wise and considerate men, greatly brings in question the sincerity of his religion.

And with the sincerity of our piety towards GOD, let us join the simplicity and integrity of manners in our conversation with men. Let us strictly charge our selves to use truth and plainness in all our words and doings; let our tongue be ever the true interpreter of our mind, and our expressions the lively image of our thoughts and affections, and our outward actions exactly agreeable to our inward purposes and intentions.

Amongst too many other instances of the great corruption and degeneracy of the age wherein we live, the great and general want of sincerity in conversation is none of the least. The world is grown so full of dissimulation and compliment, that mens words are hardly any signification of their thoughts; and if any man measure his words by his heart, and speak as he thinks, and do not express more kindness to every man, than men usually have for any man, he can hardly escape the censure of rudeness and want of breeding. The old english plainness and sincerity, that generous integrity of nature and honesty of disposition, which always argues true greatness of mind, and is usually accompanied with undaunted courage and resolution, is in a great measure lost among us; there hath been a long endeavour to transfrom us into foreign manners and fashions, and to bring us to a servile imitation of none of the best of our neighbours, in some of the worst of their qualities. The dialect of conversation is now-a-days so swell'd with vanity and compliment,

ment, and ſo furfeited (as I may ſay) with expreſſions of kindneſs and reſpect, that if a man that lived an age or two ago ſhould return into the world again, he would really want a dictionary to help him to underſtand his own language, and to know the true intrinſick value of the phraſe in faſhion, and would hardly at firſt believe at what a low rate the higheſt ſtrains and expreſſions of kindneſs imaginable do commonly paſs in current payment; and when he ſhould come to underſtand it, it would be a great while before he could bring himſelf, with a good countenance and a good conſcience, to converſe with men upon equal terms, and in their own way.

And, in truth, it is hard to ſay, whether it ſhould more provoke our contempt or our pity, to hear what ſolemn expreſſions of reſpect and kindneſs will paſs between men, almoſt upon no occaſion; how great honour and eſteem they will declare for one whom perhaps they never heard of or ſaw before, and how entirely they are all on the ſudden devoted to his ſervice and intereſt, for no reaſon; how infinitely and eternally obliged to him for no benefit, and how extremely they will be concerned for him, yea, and afflicted too, for no cauſe. I know it is ſaid, in juſtification of this hollow kind of converſation, that there is no harm, no real deceit in compliment, but the matter is well enough, ſo long as we underſtand one another; *& verba valent ut nummi*, "words are like money," and when the current value of them is generally underſtood, no man is cheated by them. This is ſomething, if ſuch words were any thing; but being brought into the account, they are meer cyphers. However, it

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is ſtill a juſt matter of complaint, that ſincerity and plainneſs are out of faſhion, and that our language is running into a lye, that men have almoſt quite perverted the uſe of ſpeech, and made words to ſignify nothing; that the greateſt part of the converſation of mankind, and of their intercourſe with one another, is little elſe but driving a trade of diſſimulation; inſomuch that it would make a man heartily ſick and weary of the world, to ſee the little ſincerity that is in uſe and practice among men, and tempt him to break out into that melancholy complaint and wiſh of the prophet, Jer. ix. "O that I had in the wilderneſs a lodging-place "of way-faring men, that I might leave my peo- "ple, and go from them: for they are all adulte- "rers, and an aſſembly of treacherous men. And "they bend their tongues like their bow for lies, "but have no courage for the truth upon earth. "Take ye heed every one of his neighbour, and "truſt ye not in any brother: for every brother "will utterly ſupplant, and every neighbour will "walk with ſlanders. Thine habitation is in the "midſt of deceit; one ſpeaketh peaceably to his "neighbour, but in his heart he lieth in wait. "Shall not I viſit for theſe things, ſaith the LORD? "and ſhall not my ſoul be avenged of ſuch a na- "tion as this?

Such were the manners of the people of Iſrael at that time, which were both the forerunner and the cauſe of thoſe terrible calamities which befell them afterwards; and this character agrees but too well to the preſent age, which is ſo wretchedly void of truth and ſincerity; for which reaſon there is the

greater

greater need to recommend this virtue to us, which seems to be fled from us, "that truth and righteousness may return, and glory may dwell in our land, "and GOD may shew his mercy upon us, and grant "us his salvation, and righteousness and peace may "kiss each other." To this end give me leave to offer these following considerations.

First, that sincerity is the highest commendation, and the very best character, that can be given of any man; it is the solid foundation of all virtue, the heart and soul of all piety and goodness; it is in scripture called perfection, and frequently joined with it; and throughout the bible, there is the greatest stress and weight laid upon it; it is spoken of as the sum and comprehension of all religion. "Only fear "the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and truth," says Joshua to the people of Israel, Jos. xxiv. 14. GOD takes great pleasure in it; so David assures us, 1 Chr. xxix. 17. "I know, my GOD, that thou triest the "heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness:" and again, "thou lovest truth in the inward parts."

To this disposition of mind the promises of divine favour and blessing are particularly made, Psal. xv. 1, 2. "LORD, who shall dwell in thy tabernacle? who "shall dwell in thy holy hill? he that walketh up-"rightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh "the truth from his heart." Psal. xxxii. 2. "Blessed "is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth no "sin, and in whose spirit there is no guile."

And 'tis observable that this character of our SAVIOUR here given of Nathanael, is the only full and perfect commendation that we read was ever given by him of any particular person. He commends

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ſome particular acts of piety and virtue in others, as St. Peter's confeſſion of him, the faith of the centurion, and of the woman that was healed by touching the hem of his garment, the charity of the woman that caſt her two mites into the treaſury, and the bounty of that other devout woman who poured upon him a box of precious ointment: but here he gives the particular character of a good man, when he ſays of Nathanael, that he was "an Iſraelite indeed, in "whom was no guile." And the apoſtle mentions this quality, as the chief ingredient into the character of the beſt man that ever was, our bleſſed SAVIOUR, "who did no ſin, neither was guile found in his "mouth."

Secondly, the rarity of this virtue is a farther commendation of it. A ſincerely pious and good man, without any guile or diſguiſe, is not a ſight to be ſeen every day. Our SAVIOUR in the text ſpeaks of it, as a thing very extraordinary and of a ſpecial remark and obſervation, and breaks out into ſome kind of wonder upon the occaſion, as if to ſee a man of perfect integrity and ſimplicity were an occurrence very rare and unuſual, and ſuch as calls for our more eſpecial attention and regard, "Behold (ſaith he) "an Iſraelite indeed, in whom there is no guile."

Thirdly, the want of ſincerity will quite ſpoil the virtue and acceptance of all our piety and obedience, and certainly deprive us of the reward of it. All that we do in the ſervice of GOD, all our external obedience to his laws, if not animated by ſincerity, is like a ſacrifice without a heart, which is an abomination to the LORD.

Fourthly,

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Fourthly, hypocriſy and inſincerity is a very vain and fooliſh thing; it is deſigned to cheat others, but is in truth a deceiving of ourſelves. No man would flatter or diſſemble, did he believe he were ſeen and diſcovered; an open knave is a great fool, who deſtroys at once both his deſign and reputation: and this is the caſe of every hypocrite; all the diſagreement which is between his tongue and his thoughts, his actions and his heart, is open to that eye, from which nothing can be hid; "for the "ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD, "and he ſeeth all his goings; there is no dark-"neſs nor ſhadow of death, where the workers of "iniquity may hide themſelves."

Fifthly, truth and reality have all the advantages of appearance, and many more. If the ſhew of any thing be good for any thing, I am ſure ſincerity is better; for why does any man diſſemble, or ſeem to be that which he is not, but becauſe he thinks it good to have ſuch a quality as he pretends to? for to counterfeit and diſſemble, is to put on the appearance of ſome real excellency. Now the beſt way in the world for a man to ſeem to be any thing, is really to be what he would ſeem to be. Beſides, that it is many times as troubleſome to make good the pretence of a good quality, as to have it; and if a man have it not, it is ten to one, but he is diſcovered to want it, and then all his pains and labour to ſeem to have it is loſt. There is ſomething unnatural in painting, which a skilful eye will eaſily diſcern from native beauty and complexion.

It is hard to perſonate and act a part long; for where truth is not at the bottom, nature will always

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be endeavouring to return, and will peep out and betray herſelf one time or other. Therefore if any man think it convenient to ſeem good, let him be ſo indeed, and then his goodneſs will appear to every body's ſatisfaction; for truth is convincing, and carries its own light and evidence along with it, and will not only commend us to every man's conſcience, but which is much more, to GOD, who ſearcheth and ſeeth our hearts; ſo that upon all accounts ſincerity is true wiſdom. Particularly as to the affairs of this world, integrity hath many advantages over all the fine and artificial ways of diſſimulation and deceit; it is much the plainer and eaſier, much the ſafer and more ſecure way of dealing in the world; it hath leſs of trouble and difficulty, of entanglement and perplexity, of danger and hazard in it; it is the ſhorteſt and neareſt way to our end, carrying us thither in a ſtraight line, and will hold out and laſt longeſt. The arts of deceit and cunning do continually grow weaker and leſs effectual and ſerviceable to them that uſe them; whereas integrity gains ſtrength by uſe, and the more and longer any man practiſeth it, the greater ſervice it does him, by confirming his reputation, and encouraging thoſe with whom he hath to do, to repoſe the greater truſt and confidence in him, which is an unſpeakable advantage in the buſineſs and affairs of life.

But a diſſembler muſt always be upon his guard, and watch himſelf carefully, that he do not contradict his own pretence; for he acts an unnatural part, and therefore muſt put a continual force and reſtraint upon himſelf. Truth always lies uppermoſt, and if a man do not carefully attend, he will be apt to bolt

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it out: whereas he that acts ſincerely, hath the eaſieſt task in the world; becauſe he follows nature, and ſo is put to no trouble and care about his words and actions; he needs not invent any pretences beforehand, nor make excuſes afterwards, for any thing he hath ſaid or done. SERM. LV.

But inſincerity is very troubleſome to manage; a man hath ſo many things to attend to, ſo many ends to bring together, as make his life a very perplext and intricate thing. *Oportet mendacem eſſe memorem*, "a liar had need of a good memory," leſt he contradict at one time what he ſaid at another: but truth is always conſiſtent with itſelf, and needs nothing to help it out; it is always near at hand, and ſits upon our lips, and is ready to drop out before we are aware; whereas a lye is troubleſome, and ſets a man's invention upon the rack, and one trick needs a great many more to make it good. It is like building upon a falſe foundation, which continually ſtands in need of props to ſhore it up, and proves at laſt more chargeable than to have raiſed a ſubſtantial building at firſt upon a true and ſolid foundation; for ſincerity is firm and ſubſtantial; and there is nothing hollow and unſound in it, and becauſe it is plain and open, fears no diſcovery, of which the crafty man is always in danger, and when he thinks he walks in the dark, all his pretences are ſo tranſparent, that he that runs may read them: he is the laſt man that finds himſelf to be found out, and whilſt he takes it for granted that he makes fools of others, he renders himſelf ridiculous.

Add

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Add to all this, that sincerity is the most compendious wisdom, and an excellent instrument for the speedy dispatch of business; it creates confidence in those we have to deal with, saves the labour of many enquiries, and brings things to an issue in few words: it is like travelling in a plain beaten road, which commonly brings a man sooner to his journey's end, than by-ways, in which men often lose themselves. In a word, whatsoever convenience may be thought to be in falshood and dissimulation, it is soon over; but the inconvenience of it is perpetual, because it brings a man under an everlasting jealousy and suspicion, so that he is not believed when he speaks truth, nor trusted, when perhaps he means honestly: when a man hath once forfeited the reputation of his integrity, he is set fast, and nothing will then serve his turn, neither truth nor falshood.

And I have often thought, that GOD hath in great wisdom hid from men of false and dishonest minds the wonderful advantages of truth and integrity to the prosperity even of our worldly affairs; these men are so blinded by their covetousness and ambition, that they cannot look beyond a present advantage; nor forbear to seize upon it, tho' by ways never so indirect; they cannot see so far, as to the remote consequences of a steddy integrity, and the vast benefit and advantages which it will bring a man at last. Were but this sort of men wise and clear-sighted enough to discern this, they would be honest, out of very knavery, not out of any love to honesty or virtue, but with a crafty design to promote and advance more effectually their own interests; and therefore the justice of the divine providence hath hid

hid this trueſt point of wiſdom from their eyes, that bad men might not be upon equal terms with the juſt and upright, and ſerve their own wicked deſigns by honeſt and lawful means.

Indeed, if a man were only to deal in the world for a day, and ſhould never have occaſion to converſe more with mankind, never more need their good opinion, or good word, it were then no great matter (ſpeaking as to the concernments of the world) if a man ſpent his reputation all at once, and ventured it at one throw: but if he be to continue in the world, and would have the advantage of converſation whilſt he is in it, let him make uſe of truth and ſincerity in all his words and actions, for nothing but this will laſt and hold out to the end; all other arts will fail, but truth and integrity will carry a man through, and bear him out to the laſt.

'Tis the obſervation of Solomon, Prov. xii. 19. "The lip of truth is eſtabliſhed for ever: but a "lying tongue is but for a moment." And the wiſer any man is, the more clearly will he diſcern, how ſerviceable ſincerity is to all the great ends and purpoſes of humane life; and that man hath made a good progreſs, and profited much in the ſchool of wiſdom, who valueth truth and ſincerity according to their worth. Every man will readily grant them to be great virtues, and arguments of a generous mind, but that there is ſo much of true wiſdom in them, and that they really ſerve to profit our intereſt in this world, ſeems a great paradox to the generality of men; and yet I doubt not but it is undoubtedly true, and generally found to be ſo, in the experience of mankind.

Laſtly,

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Laſtly, Conſider that it is not worth our while to diſſemble, conſidering the ſhortneſs and eſpecially the uncertainty of our lives. To what purpoſe ſhould we be ſo cunning, when our abode in this world is ſo ſhort and uncertain? why ſhould any man by diſſembling his judgment, or acting contrary to it, incur at once the diſpleaſure of GOD, and the diſcontent of his own mind? eſpecially if we conſider, that all our diſſimulation ſhall one day be made manifeſt and publiſhed on the open theatre of the world, before GOD, angels, and men, to our everlaſting ſhame and confuſion; all diſguiſe and vizards ſhall then be pluckt off, and every man ſhall appear in his true colours. "For then the ſecrets of men ſhall be "judged, and GOD will bring every work into judg- "ment, and every ſecret thing, whether it be good, "or whether it be evil. Nothing is now covered, "which ſhall not then be revealed, nor hid which "ſhall not then be known."

Let us then be now what we would be glad to be found in that day, when all pretences ſhall be examined, and the cloſeſt hypocriſy of men ſhall be laid open and daſht out of countenance; when the ſecrets of all hearts ſhall be diſcloſed, and all the hidden works of darkneſs ſhall be revealed, and all our thoughts, words, and actions ſhall be brought to a ſtrict and ſevere trial, and be cenſured, by that impartial and infallible judgment of GOD, which is according to truth; "in the day when God ſhall judge the ſe- "crets of men by JESUS CHRIST."

To whom, with the FATHER and the HOLY GHOST, be glory now and for ever. Amen.

SERMON

SERMON LVI.

The excellency of Abraham's faith and obedience.

HEBREWS xi. 17, 18, 19.

By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son: of whom it was said, that in Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.

SERM. LVI. Preached at Whitehall, 1686, before the princess Anne.

THE design of this epistle to the Hebrews is to recommend to them the christian religion, to which they were but newly converted, and to encourage them to constancy in the profession of it, notwithstanding the sufferings which attended it. He sets before them in this chapter several examples in the old testament of those, who, tho' they were under a much more imperfect dispensation, yet by a stedfast belief in God and his promises, had performed such wonderful acts of obedience and self-denial.

He begins with the patriarchs before the flood; but insists chiefly upon the examples of two eminent persons of their own nation, as nearest to them, and most likely to prevail upon them, the examples of

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Abraham and Moſes, the one the father of their nation, the other their great lawgiver, and both of them the greateſt patterns of faith, and obedience, and ſelf-denial, that the hiſtory of all former ages, from the beginning of the world, had afforded.

I ſhall at this time, by GOD's aſſiſtance, treat of the firſt of theſe, the example of Abraham, the conſtancy of whoſe faith, and the chearfulneſs of whoſe obedience, even in the difficulteſt caſes, is ſo remarkable above all the other examples mentioned in this chapter. For, "at the command of GOD he "left his kindred and his country, not knowing "whither he ſhould go;" by which eminent act of obedience he declared himſelf to be wholly at GOD's diſpoſal, and ready to follow him: but this was no trial in compariſon of that here in my text, when GOD commanded him "to offer up his only ſon:" but ſuch was the immutable ſtedfaſtneſs of his faith, and the perfect ſubmiſſion of his obedience, that it does not appear that he made the leaſt check at it; but out of perfect reverence and obedience to the authority of the divine command, he went about it as readily and chearfully as if GOD had bid him do ſome ſmall thing: "by faith Abraham, when he was "tried, offered up Iſaac."

For the explication of which words, it will be requiſite to conſider two things

Firſt, the trial or temptation in general.

Secondly, the excellency of Abraham's faith and obedience upon his trial.

Firſt, the trial or temptation in general: it is ſaid "that Abraham when he was tried, the word is

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"πειραζόμενος, being tempted:" that is, GOD intending to make trial of his faith and obedience; and so it is expreſt, Gen. xxii. 1. where it is ſaid, "that "GOD did tempt Abraham, and ſaid unto him, "take now thy ſon, thine only ſon."

Now there are two difficulties concerning this matter. It ſeems contrary to ſcripture, that GOD ſhould tempt any man; and contrary to reaſon; becauſe GOD, who knows what every man will do, needed not to make trial of any man's faith and obedience.

Firſt, it ſeems contrary to ſcripture; which ſays, "GOD tempts no man:" and 'tis moſt true, that GOD tempts no man, with a deſign to draw him into ſin; but this doth not hinder, but he may try their faith and obedience with great difficulties, to make them the more illuſtrious. Thus GOD tempted Abraham; and he permitted Job, and even our bleſſed SAVIOUR himſelf to be thus tempted.

Secondly, it ſeems contrary to reaſon, that GOD, who knows what any man will do in any circumſtances, ſhould go to make trial of it. But GOD does not try men for his own information; but to give an illuſtrious proof and example to others of faith and obedience: and tho' after this trial of Abraham, GOD ſays to him, "now I know that "thou loveſt me, becauſe thou haſt not withheld "thy ſon, thine only ſon from me;" yet we are to underſtand this as ſpoken after the manner of men; as GOD elſewhere ſpeaks to Abraham concerning Sodom; "I will go down now to ſee "whether they have done altogether according to

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" the cry which is come up unto me; and if not, " I will know."

I proceed to the ſecond thing I propoſed, the excellency of Abraham's faith and obedience upon this trial: " By faith Abraham when he was tried offered " up Iſaac." God accepts of it, as if he had done it; becauſe he had done it in part, and was ready to have performed the reſt, if God had not countermanded him.

And this act of faith and obedience in Abraham will appear the more illuſtrious, if we conſider theſe three things.

I. The firmneſs and ſtedfaſtneſs of his faith, notwithſtanding the objections againſt it.

II. The conſtancy of his reſolution, notwithſtanding the difficulty of the thing.

III. The reaſonableneſs of his faith, in that he gave ſatisfaction to himſelf in ſo hard and perplext a caſe.

I. The firmneſs and ſtedfaſtneſs of his faith will appear, if we conſider what objections there were in the caſe, enough to ſhake a very ſtrong faith. There were three great objections againſt this command, and ſuch as might in reaſon make a wiſe and good man doubtful whether this command were from God.

The horrid nature of the thing commanded.

The grievous ſcandal that might ſeem almoſt unavoidably to follow upon it.

And the horrible conſequence of it, which ſeemed to make the former promiſe of God to Abraham void.

First,

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First, the horrid nature of the thing commanded, which was for a father to kill his own child. This must needs appear very barbarous and unnatural, and look liker a sacrifice to an idol, than to the true God.

It seemed to be against the law of nature, and directly contrary to that kindness and affection which God himself had planted in the hearts of parents towards their children.

And there is no affection more natural and strong than this; for there are many persons that would redeem the lives of their children with the hazard of their own. Now that God hath planted such an affection in nature, is an argument that it is good, and therefore it could not but seem strange, that he should command any thing contrary to it: and in this case, there were two circumstances that increased the horror of the fact; that his son was innocent; and that he was to slay him with his own hands.

1. That his son was innocent. It would grieve the heart of any father, to give up his son to death, tho' he were never so undutiful and disobedient.

So passionately was David affected with the death of his son Absalom, as to wish he had died for him, tho' he died in the very act of rebellion, and tho' the saving of his life had been inconsistent with the peace of his government.

How deep then must it sink into the heart of a father, to give up his innocent son to death? and such a son was Isaac, for any thing that appeared to the contrary. God himself gave him this testimony, "that he "was the son whom his father loved," and there is

no

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no intimation of any thing to the contrary. Now this could not but appear ſtrange to a good man, that God ſhould command an innocent perſon to be put to death. But,

2. That a father ſhould be commanded, not only to give up his ſon to death, but to ſlay him with his own hands; not only to be a ſpectator, but to be the actor in this tragedy. What father would not ſhrink, and ſtart back at ſuch a command? what good man eſpecially in ſuch a caſe, and where nature was ſo hard preſt, would not have been apt to have looked upon ſuch a revelation as this, rather as the ſuggeſtion and illuſion of an evil ſpirit, than a command of God? and yet Abraham's faith was not ſtaggered, ſo as to call this revelation of God in queſtion.

Secondly, the grievous ſcandal that might ſeem almoſt unavoidably to follow upon it, was another great objection againſt it. The report of ſuch an action would in all appearance blemiſh the reputation, even of ſo good a man, amongſt all ſober and conſiderate perſons, who could hardly forbear to cenſure him, as a wicked and unnatural man.

And this was a hard caſe, for a man to be put to ſacrifice at once two of the deareſt things in the world, his reputation and his ſon: nor could he have eaſily defended himſelf from this imputation, by alledging an expreſs revelation and command of God for it; for who would give credit to it?

A revelation to another man is nothing to me, unleſs I be aſſured, that he had ſuch a revelation, which I cannot be, but either by another immediate revelation, or by ſome miracle to confirm it.

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The act had an appearance of so much horror, that it was not easily credible that God should command it; and if every man's confident pretence to revelation be admitted, the worst actions may plead this in their excuse. So that this pretence would have been so far from excusing his fault, that it must rather have been esteemed an high aggravation of it, by adding the boldest impiety to the most barbarous inhumanity.

But Abraham was not stumbled at this, nor at the advantage which the enemies of his religion would make of such an occasion, who would be ready to say, "here is your excellent good man, and likely "to be a friend of God, who was so cruel an "enemy to his own son!" All this, 'tis probable, he might consider: but it did not move him, being resolved to obey God, and to leave it to his wisdom to provide against all the inconveniencies that might follow upon it.

Thirdly, the strongest objection of all was the horrible consequence of the thing, which seemed to clash with former revelations, and to make void the promise which God had before made to Abraham, "that in his seed all the nations of the earth should "be blessed," which promise was expresly limited to Isaac and his posterity, who had then no son.

And of this difficulty the apostle takes express notice in the text, "that he that had received the "promises (that is, was persuaded of the truth and "faithfulness of them) offered up his only begotten "son, of whom it was said, that in Isaac shall thy "seed be called."

And

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And this objection is really so strong, that if Abraham could not have given himself satisfaction about it, he might justly have questioned the truth of the revelation. For no man can possibly entertain two contradictory revelations as from GOD, but he must of necessity question one or both of them: but so strong was Abraham's faith, as not to be shaken by the seeming contradiction of these two revelations.

II. We will consider the constancy of his resolution to obey GOD, notwithstanding the harshness and difficulty of the thing. Tho' Abraham were firmly persuaded, that this command to kill his son was really from GOD; yet it is no easy matter for a man to bring himself to obey GOD in so difficult a case, and out of meer reverence to the divine authority, to divest himself of his nature, and to thwart the strongest inclinations of it; a man would be very apt to confer with flesh and blood in such a case. Let but any man that knows what it is to be a father, lay his hand upon his heart, and consider his own bowels; and he will be astonished at Abraham's obedience as well as his faith.

"To take his son, his only son, his son whom "he loved," and in whom he placed all his hopes of a happy posterity, and with his own hands to destroy him and all his hopes together! it must be a strong faith that will engage a man to obedience in so difficult an instance.

There is one circumstance more especially, which renders Abraham's obedience very remarkable; the deliberateness of the action. It had not been so much, if so soon as he had received this command from

from GOD, he had upon a ſudden impulſe and tranſ- SERM. LVI.
port of zeal done this.

But that his obedience might be the more glorious, and have all the circumſtances of advantage given to it, GOD would have it done deliberately, and upon full conſideration; and therefore he bad him go to the mountain three days journey from the place where he was, and there to offer up his ſon.

It is in acts of virtue and obedience, as in acts of ſin and vice; the more deliberate the ſin is, and the more calm and ſedate temper the man is in when he commits it, the greater is the fault; whereas, what is done by ſurprize, in the heat of temptation or tranſport of paſſion, hath ſome excuſe from the ſuddenneſs and undeliberateneſs of it.

So it is in acts of virtue and obedience, eſpecially if they be attended with conſiderable difficulty, the more deliberately they are done, the more virtuous they are, and the greater praiſe is due to them.

Now, that Abraham's obedience might want nothing to heighten it, GOD ſeems on purpoſe to have put ſo long a ſpace betwixt the command and the performance of it; he gives him time to cool upon it, to weigh the command, and to look on every ſide of this difficult duty; he gives ſcope for his reaſon to argue, and debate the caſe, and opportunity for natural affection to play its part, and for fleſh and blood to raiſe all its batteries againſt the reſolution which he had taken up.

And now we may eaſily imagine, what conflict this good man had within himſelf, during thoſe

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three days that he was travelling to the mountain in Moriah; and how his heart was ready to be rent in pieces, betwixt his duty to GOD, and his affection to his child; ſo that every ſtep of this unwelcome and weariſome journey, he did, as it were, lay violent hands upon himſelf.

He was to offer up his ſon but once; but he ſacrificed himſelf and his own will every moment for three days together; and when he came thither, and all things were ready, the altar, the wood, and the fire, and the knife, it muſt needs be a ſtabbing queſtion, and wound him to the heart, which his innocent ſon ſo innocently askt him, "where is "the lamb for a burnt-offering?"

It muſt be a ſtrong faith indeed, and a mighty reſolution, that could make him to hold out three days againſt the violent aſſaults of his own nature, and the charming preſence of his ſon, enough to melt his heart, as often as he caſt his eyes upon him: and yet nothing of all this, made him to ſtagger in his duty, "but being ſtrong in faith, he "gave glory to GOD," by one of the moſt miraculous acts of obedience that ever was exacted from any of the ſons of men.

III. In the third and laſt place, I come to conſider the reaſonableneſs of his faith, in that he was able to give ſatisfaction to himſelf in ſo intricate and perplext a caſe. The conſtancy of Abraham's faith, was not an obſtinate and ſtubborn perſuaſion, but the reſult of the wiſeſt reaſoning, and ſobereſt conſideration.

So the text ſay, "that he counted, the word is "λογισάμενος, he reaſoned with himſef, that GOD "was

" was able to raiſe him up from the dead;" ſo that he debated the matter with himſelf, and gave himſelf ſatisfaction, concerning the objections and difficulties in the caſe; and being fully ſatisfied that it was a divine command, he reſolved to obey it. SERM. LVI.

As for the objections I have mentioned:

1. The horrid appearance of the thing, that a father ſhould ſlay his innocent ſon. Why ſhould Abraham ſcruple the doing this, at the command of GOD, who being the author of life, hath power over it, and may reſume what he hath given, and take away the life of any of his creatures when he will, and make whom he pleaſeth inſtruments in the execution of his command?

It was indeed a hard caſe, conſidering natural affection; and therefore GOD did not permit it to be executed.

But the queſtion of GOD's right over the lives of men; and of his authority to command any man to be the inſtrument of his pleaſure in ſuch a caſe, admits of no diſpute.

And tho' GOD hath planted ſtrong affections in parents towards their children; yet he hath written no law in any man's heart to the prejudice of his own ſovereign right. This is a caſe always excepted, and this takes away the objection of injuſtice.

2. As to the ſcandal of it, that could be no great objection in thoſe times, when the abſolute power of parents over their children was in its full force, and they might put them to death without being accountable for it. So that then it was no ſuch ſtartling matter to hear of a father putting his

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child to death. Nay, in much later times we find that in the moſt ancient laws of the Romans (I mean thoſe of the xii tables) children are abſolutely put in the power of their parents, to whom is given, *jus vitæ & necis*, " a power of life and " death over them;" and likewiſe to ſell them for ſlaves.

And tho' amongſt the Jews this paternal power was limited by the law of Moſes; and the judgment of life and death was taken out of the father's hands, except in caſe of contumacy and rebellion; (and even in that caſe the proceſs was to be before the elders of the city) yet it is certain, that in elder times the paternal power was more abſolute and unaccountable, which takes off much from the horror and ſcandal of the thing, as it appears now to us who have no ſuch power.

And therefore we do not find in the hiſtory, that this objection did much ſtick with Abraham; it being then no unuſual thing for a father to put his child to death upon a juſt account.

And the command of God, who hath abſolute dominion over the lives of his creatures, is certainly a juſt reaſon; and no man can reaſonably ſcruple the doing of that, upon the command of God, which he might have done by his own authority, without being accountable for the action, to any but God only.

3. As to the objection from the horrible conſequence of the thing commanded, that the ſlaying of Iſaac ſeemed to overthrow the promiſe, which God had made before to Abraham, " that in Iſaac his " ſeed ſhould be called:" This ſeems to him to be

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the great difficulty, and here he makes use of reason, SERM. LVI.
to reconcile the seeming contradiction of this command of GOD to his former promise. So the text tells us, "that he offered up his only begotten son, "of whom it was said, that in Isaac shall thy seed "be called; reasoning that GOD was able to raise "him up from the dead." So that tho' Isaac were put to death, yet he saw, how the promise of GOD might still be made good by his being raised from the dead, and living afterwards to have a numerous posterity.

There had then indeed been no instance, or example of any such thing in the world, as the resurrection of one from the dead, which makes Abraham's faith the more wonderful: but he confirmed himself in this belief, by an example as near the case as might be; "he reasoned, that GOD was able to "raise him from the dead, from whence also he had "received him in a figure."

This I know is by interpreters generally understood of Isaac's being delivered from the jaws of death, when he was laid upon the altar, and ready to be slain. But the text seems not to speak of what happened after; but of something that had passed before, by which Abraham confirmed himself in this persuasion, that if he were slain, GOD would raise him up again.

And so the words ὅθεν ἐκομίσατο ought to be rendered, in the past time, "from whence also he had "received him in a figure." So that this expression plainly refers to the miraculous birth of Isaac, when his parents were past the age of having children; which

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which was little leſs than a reſurrection from the dead.

And ſo the ſcripture ſpeaks of it, Rom. iv. 17. "Abraham believed GOD, who quickeneth the dead, "and calleth the things which are not, as if they "were; and not being weak in faith, he conſidered "not his own body which was dead;" and a little before the text, (ſpeaking of the miraculous birth of Iſaac) "and therefore ſprang there of one, and him "as good as dead, as many as the ſtars of heaven."

From whence (as the apoſtle tells us) Abraham reaſoned thus; that GOD, who gave him Iſaac at firſt in ſo miraculous a manner, was able by another miracle to reſtore him to life again, after he was dead, and to make him the father of many nations. "He "reaſoned, that GOD was able to raiſe him up from "the dead, from whence alſo he had received him in "a figure."

Thus you ſee the reaſonableneſs of Abraham's faith; he pitched upon the main difficulty in the caſe, and he anſwered it, as well as was poſſible: and in his reaſoning about this matter he gives the utmoſt weight to every thing that might tend to vindicate the truth and faithfulneſs of GOD's promiſe, and to make the revelations of GOD conſiſtent with one another; and this, tho' he had a great intereſt and a very tender concernment of his own, to have biaſſed him.

For he might have argued with great appearance and probability the other way: but as every pious and good man ſhould do, he reaſoned on GOD's ſide, and favoured that part. Rather than diſobey a command

mand of GOD, or believe that his promiſe ſhould be fruſtrate, he will believe any thing that is credible and poſſible, how improbable ſoever. Thus far faith will go; but no farther. From the believing of plain contradictions and impoſſibilities, it always deſires to be excuſed.

Thus much for explication of the words; which I hope hath not been altogether unprofitable, becauſe it tends to clear a point which hath ſomething of difficulty and obſcurity in it, and to vindicate the holy ſcripture, and the divine revelation therein contained, from one of the moſt ſpecious objections of infidelity.

But I had a farther deſign in this text; and that is, to make ſome obſervations and inferences from it, that may be of uſe to us. As,

Firſt, that humane nature is capable of clear and full ſatisfaction, concerning a divine revelation. For if Abraham had not been fully and paſt all doubt aſſured, that this was a command from GOD; he would certainly have ſpared his ſon. And nothing is more reaſonable, than to believe, that thoſe, to whom GOD is pleaſed to make immediate revelations of his will, are ſome way or other aſſured that they are divine; otherwiſe they would be in vain, and to no purpoſe.

But how men are aſſured concerning divine revelations made to them, is not ſo eaſy to make out to others; only theſe two things we are ſure of.

1. That GOD can work in the mind of man a firm perſuaſion of the truth of what he reveals, and that ſuch a revelation is from him. This no man can doubt of, that conſiders the great power and influence,

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fluence, which GOD, who made us, and perfectly knows our frame, must needs have upon our minds and understandings.

2. That GOD never offers any thing to any man's belief, that plainly contradicts the natural and essential notions of his mind; because this would be for GOD to destroy his own workmanship, and to impose that upon the understanding of man, which whilst it remains what it is, it cannot possibly admit.

For instance, we cannot imagine that GOD should reveal to any man any thing that plainly contradicts the essential perfections of the divine nature: for such a revelation can no more be supposed to be from GOD, than a revelation from GOD, that there is no GOD; which is a downright contradiction.

Now to apply this to the revelation which GOD made to Abraham, concerning the sacrificing of his son: this was made to him by an audible voice, and he was fully satisfied by the evidence which it carried along with it, that it was from GOD.

For this was not the first of many revelations that had been made to him, so that he knew the manner of them, and had found by manifold experience, that he was not deceived, and upon this experience was grown to a great confidence in the truth and goodness of GOD. And it is very probable, the first time GOD appeared to Abraham, because it was a new thing, that to make way for the credit of future revelations, GOD did shew himself to him in so glorious a manner, as was abundantly to his conviction.

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And this St. Stephen does seem to intimate, Acts vii. 2. "The GOD of glory appeared to our father "Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia." Now by this glorious appearance of GOD to him at first, he was so prepared for the entertainment of after-revelations, that he was not staggered even at this, concerning the sacrificing of his son, being both by the manner of it, and the assurance that accompanied it, fully satisfied, that it was from GOD.

Secondly, I observe from hence the great and necessary use of reason in matters of faith. For we see here, that Abraham's reason was a mighty strengthning and help to his faith. Here were two revelations made to Abraham, which seemed to clash with one another; and if Abraham's reason could not have reconciled the repugnancy of them, he could not possibly have believed them both to be from GOD; because this natural notion or principle, "that GOD cannot contradict himself," every man does first, and more firmly believe, than any revelation whatsoever.

Now Abraham's reason relieved him in this strait. So the text expressly tells us, "he reasoned with "himself, that GOD was able to raise him from the "dead."

And this being admitted, the command of GOD, concerning the slaying of Isaac, was very well consistent with his former promise, "that in Isaac his "seed should be called."

I know, there hath a very rude clamour been raised by some persons, (but of more zeal, I think, than judgment) against the use of reason in matters of

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faith: but how very unreaſonable this is, will appear to any one that will but have patience to conſider theſe following particulars.

1. The nature of divine revelation; that it doth not endow men with new faculties, but propoundeth new objects to the faculties, which they had before. Reaſon is the faculty whereby revelation is to be diſcerned; for when GOD reveals any thing to us, he reveals it to our underſtanding, and by that we are to judge of it. Therefore St. John cautions us, 1 John iv. 1. "not to believe every ſpirit; but to try the "ſpirits whether they are of GOD; becauſe many "falſe prophets are gone out into the world;" that is, there are many that falſly pretend to inſpiration: but how can theſe pretenders be tried and diſcerned from thoſe that are truly inſpired, but by uſing our reaſon, in comparing the evidence for the one and the other?

2. This will farther appear, if we conſider the nature of faith. Faith (as we are now ſpeaking of it) is an aſſent of the mind to ſomething as revealed by GOD: now all aſſent muſt be grounded upon evidence; that is, no man can believe any thing, unleſs he have or thinks he hath ſome reaſon to do ſo. For to be confident of a thing without reaſon, is not faith; but a preſumptuous perſuaſion and obſtinacy of mind.

3. This will yet be more evident, if we conſider the method, that muſt of neceſſity be uſed to convince any man of the truth of religion. Suppoſe, we had to deal with one that is a ſtranger and enemy to chriſtianity, what means are proper to be uſed to gain

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gain him over to it? the moſt natural method ſurely were this, to acquaint him with the holy ſcriptures, which are the rule of our faith and practice. He would ask us, "why we believe that book?" The proper anſwer would be, "becauſe it is the word "of GOD;" this he could not but acknowledge to be a very good reaſon, if it were true: but then he would ask "why he believed it to be the word "of GOD, rather than Mahomet's alcoran, which "pretends no leſs to be of divine inſpiration?"

If any man now ſhould anſwer, "that he could "give no reaſon, why he believed it to be the word "of GOD, only he believed it to be ſo, and ſo every "man elſe ought to do without enquiring after any "farther reaſon, becauſe reaſon is to be laid aſide in "matters of faith;" would not the man preſently reply, "that he had juſt as much reaſon as this comes "to, to believe the alcoran, or any thing elſe;" that is, none at all?

But certainly the better way would be to ſatisfy this man's reaſon by proper arguments that the ſcriptures are a divine revelation, and that no other book in the world, can with equal reaſon pretend to be ſo: and if this be a good way, then we do and muſt call in the aſſiſtance of reaſon for the proof of our religion.

4. Let it be conſidered farther, that the higheſt commendations that are given in ſcripture to any one's faith, are given upon account of the reaſonableneſs of it. Abraham's faith is famous, and made a pattern to all generations, becauſe he reaſoned himſelf into it, notwithſtanding the objections

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to the contrary, and he did not blindly break thro' theſe objections, and wink hard at them; but he looked them in the face, and gave himſelf reaſonable ſatisfaction concerning them.

The centurion's faith is commended by our SAVIOUR, Matth. viii. 9. becauſe when his ſervant was ſick, he did not deſire him to come to his houſe, but "to ſpeak the word only, and his ſervant ſhould "be healed:" for he reaſoned thus, "I am a man "under authority, having ſoldiers under me, and I "ſay to this man go, and he goeth; and to another, "come, and he cometh; and to my ſervant, do this, "and he doth it." Now if he, that was himſelf under authority, could thus command thoſe that were under him; much more could he that had a divine power and commiſſion, do what he pleaſed by his word. And our SAVIOUR is ſo far from reprehending him for reaſoning himſelf into this belief, that he admires his faith ſo much the more for the reaſonableneſs of it, ver. 10. "When Jeſus heard "this, he marvelled, and ſaid to them that followed "him, verily I ſay unto you, I have not found ſo "great faith, no not in Iſrael."

In like manner our SAVIOUR commends the woman of Canaan's faith, becauſe ſhe enforced it ſo reaſonably, Matth. xv. 22. She ſued him to help her daughter; "but he anſwered her not a word;" and when his diſciples could not prevail with him to mind her, yet ſtill ſhe preſſed him, "ſaying, Lord "help me;" and when he repulſed her with this ſevere anſwer, "it is not meet to take the childrens "bread and caſt it to dogs;" ſhe made this quick

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and modeſt reply, "truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat "of the crumbs which fall from their maſters ta- "ble." She acknowledgeth her own unworthineſs; but yet believes his goodneſs to be ſuch, that he will not utterly reject thoſe who humbly ſeek to him; upon which he gives her this teſtimony, "O "woman, great is thy faith!" SERM. LVI.

The apoſtles were divinely inſpired; and yet the Bereans are commended, becauſe they inquired and ſatisfied themſelves in the reaſons of their belief, before they aſſented to the doctrine which was delivered to them, even by teachers that certainly were infallible.

5. None are reproved in ſcripture for their unbelief, but where ſufficient reaſon and evidence was offered to them. The Iſraelites were generally blamed for their infidelity; but then it was after ſuch mighty wonders had been wrought for their conviction.

The Jews, in our SAVIOUR's time, are not condemned ſimply for their unbelief; but for not believing when there was ſuch clear evidence offered to them. So our SAVIOUR himſelf ſays, "if I had "not done amongſt them the works which no other "man did, they had not had ſin."

Thomas indeed is blamed for the perverſeneſs of his unbelief, becauſe he would believe nothing but what he himſelf ſaw.

Laſtly, to ſhew this yet more plainly, let us conſider the great inconvenience and abſurdity of declining the uſe of reaſon in matters of religion. There can be no greater prejudice to religion, than to decline this trial.

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To ſay, we have no reaſon for our religion, is to ſay, it is unreaſonable. Indeed it is reaſon enough for any article of our faith, that GOD hath revealed it; becauſe this is one of the ſtrongeſt and moſt cogent reaſons for the belief of any thing. But when we ſay GOD hath revealed any thing, we muſt be ready to prove it, or elſe we ſay nothing. If we turn off reaſon here, we level the beſt religion in the world with the wildeſt and moſt abſurd enthuſiaſms.

And it does not alter the caſe much, to give reaſon ill names, to call it blind, and carnal reaſon. Our beſt reaſon is but very ſhort and imperfect: but ſince it is no better, we muſt make uſe of it as it is, and make the beſt of it.

Before I paſs from this argument, I cannot but obſerve, that both the extremes of thoſe who differ from our church, are generally great declaimers againſt the uſe of reaſon in matters of faith. If they find their account in it, 'tis well; for our parts we apprehend no manner of inconvenience, in having reaſon on our ſide; nor need we to deſire a better evidence, that any man is in the wrong, than to hear him declare againſt reaſon, and thereby to acknowledge that reaſon is againſt him. Men may vilify reaſon as much as they pleaſe; and tho' being reviled ſhe reviles not again, yet in a more ſtill and gentle way, ſhe commonly hath her full revenge upon all thoſe that rail at her.

I have often wondered that people can with patience endure to hear their teachers and guides talk againſt reaſon; and not only ſo, but they pay them the greater ſubmiſſion and veneration for it. One would

would think this but an odd way to gain authority over the minds of men: but some skilful and designing men have found by experience, that it is a very good way to recommend them to the ignorant; as nurses use to endear themselves to children, by perpetual noise and nonsense.

Thirdly, I observe, that God obligeth no man to believe plain and evident contradictions, as matters of faith. Abraham could not reasonably have believed this second revelation to have been from God, if he had not found some way to reconcile it with the first. For tho' a man were never so much disposed to submit his reason to divine revelation; yet it is not possible for any man to believe God against God himself.

Some men seem to think, that they oblige God mightily, by believing plain contradictions. But the matter is quite otherwise. He that made man a reasonable creature, cannot take it kindly from any man to debase his workmanship, by making himself unreasonable. And therefore, as no service, or obedience; so no faith is acceptable unto God, but what is reasonable: if it be not so, it may be confidence or presumption; but it is not faith. For he that can believe plain contradictions, may believe any thing how absurd soever; because nothing can be more absurd, than the belief of a plain contradiction; and he that can believe any thing, believes nothing upon good grounds, because to him truth and falshood are all one.

Fourthly, I observe, that the great cause of the defect of mens obedience is the weakness of their faith,

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faith. Did we believe the commands of GOD in the gospel, and his promises and threatnings, as firmly as Abraham believed GOD in this case; what should we not be ready to do, or suffer, in obedience to him?

If our faith were but as strong and vigorous as his was, the effects of it would be as great and conspicuous. Were we verily persuaded, that all the precepts of our religion are the express laws of GOD, and that all the promises and threatnings of the gospel will one day be verified and made good; "what manner of persons should we be in all holy "conversation and godliness?" How would the lively thoughts of another world, raise us above the vanities of this present life; and set us out of the reach of the most powerful temptations that this world can assault us withal; and make us to do all things with regard to eternity, and to that solemn and dreadful account which we must one day make to GOD the judge of all?

It is nothing but the want of a firm and steady belief of these things that makes our devotion so dead and heartless, and our resolutions of doing better so weak and inconstant. This it is that makes us so easy a prey to every temptation; and the things of this world to look so much bigger than they are, the enjoyments of it more tempting, and the evils of it more terrible than in truth they are; and in all disputes betwixt our conscience and our interest, this makes us hold the balance so unequally, and to put our foot upon the lighter scale, that it may seem to weigh down the other.

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In a word, in proportion to the ſtrength or weakneſs of our faith, our obedience to GOD will be more or leſs conſtant, uniform, and perfect; becauſe faith is the great ſource and ſpring of all the virtues of a good life.

Fifthly, we have great reaſon to ſubmit to the ordinary ſtrokes of GOD's providence upon our ſelves, or near relations, or any thing that is dear to us. Moſt of theſe are eaſy, compared with Abraham's caſe; it requires a prodigious ſtrength of faith to perform ſo miraculous an act of obedience.

Sixthly, and laſtly, we are utterly inexcuſable, if we diſobey the eaſy precepts of the goſpel. "The "yoke of CHRIST is eaſy, and his burden light," in compariſon of GOD's former diſpenſations. This was a grievous commandment which GOD gave to Abraham, to ſacrifice his only ſon: "it was a hard "ſaying indeed; and which of us could have been "able to bear it?"

But if GOD think fit to call us to the more difficult duties of ſelf-denial, and ſuffering for his truth and righteouſneſs ſake, we muſt, after the example of faithful Abraham, not think much to deny, or part with any thing for him, no not life it ſelf. But even this, which is the hardeſt part of religion, is eaſier than what GOD put upon Abraham.

For it doth not offer near the violence to nature, to lay down our life in a good cauſe, as it would do to put a child to death with our own hands. Beſides the conſideration of the extraordinary comfort and ſupport, and the glorious rewards

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that are expreſly promiſed to our obedience and ſelf-denial in ſuch a caſe; encouragement enough to make a very difficult duty eaſy.

And whilſt I am perſuading you and my ſelf to reſolution and conſtancy in our holy religion, notwithſtanding all hazards and hardſhips that may attend it, I have a juſt ſenſe of the frailty of humane nature, and of humane reſolution: but withal, a moſt firm perſuaſion of the goodneſs of GOD, that he will not ſuffer thoſe who ſincerely love him and his truth, "to be tempted above what they "are able."

I will add but one conſideration more, to ſhew the difference betwixt Abraham's caſe and ours. GOD commanded him to do the hardeſt thing in the world, to ſacrifice his only ſon; but he hath given us an eaſy commandment; and that he might effectually oblige us to our duty, he hath done that for us which he required Abraham to do for him; "he hath not ſpared his own ſon, his only ſon; "but hath given him up to death for us all: and "hereby we know, that he loveth us, that he hath "given his ſon for us."

What GOD required of Abraham, he did not intend ſhould be executed; but one great deſign of it was to be a type and figure of that immenſe love and kindneſs which he intended to all mankind in the ſacrifice of his ſon, as a propitiation for the ſins of the whole world.

And as the moſt clear and expreſs promiſe of the MESSIAS was made to Abraham; ſo the moſt expreſs and lively type of the MESSIAS that we meet with

with in all the old teſtament, was Abraham's of- SERM. LVI.
fering up his ſon. And as St. Hierom tells us (from an ancient and conſtant tradition of the Jews) the mountain in Moriah, where Abraham was commanded to ſacrifice Iſaac, was mount Calvary, where our LORD alſo was crucified and offered up, "that "by this one ſacrifice of himſelf once offered, he "might perfect for ever them that are ſanctified, "and obtain eternal redemption for us."

"Now to him that ſitteth upon the throne, and "to the lamb that was ſlain; to GOD even our "father, and to our LORD JESUS CHRIST, the firſt "begotten from the dead; to the prince of the "kings of the earth; to him that loved us, and "waſhed us from our ſins in his own blood; to "him be glory and honour, thankſgiving and "power, now and for ever, Amen."

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Moſes's choice of afflicted piety, rather than a kingdom.

HEB. xi. 24, 25.

By faith Moſes when he was come to years, refuſed to be called the ſon of Pharaoh's daughter; chooſing rather to ſuffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleaſures of ſin for a ſeaſon.

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Preached at Whitehall, 1687. before the princeſs Anne.

THE text ſets before us a great pattern of ſelf-denial: for our better underſtanding whereof I will give a brief account of the hiſtory of Moſes, to which our apoſtle in this paſſage doth refer.

When Moſes was born, his parents (for fear of the cruel law which Pharaoh had made, "that all "the male children of the Hebrews, ſo ſoon as "they were born, ſhould be put to death") after they had hid him three months, did at laſt expoſe him in an ark of bulruſhes, upon the river Nile, and committed him to the providence of GOD, whom they deſpaired to conceal any longer by their own care.

Pharaoh's daughter, coming by the river ſide, eſpied him, and had compaſſion on him; and gueſſing

ſing him to be one of the hebrew children, called for an hebrew nurſe, to take care of him, who, as the providence of GOD had ordered it, proved to be the child's own mother. As he grew up, Pharaoh's daughter took care of his education in all princely qualities, and adopted him for her ſon; and Pharaoh (as Joſephus tells us) being without ſon, deſigned him heir of his kingdom. SERM. LVII.

Moſes refuſed this great offer. But why did he refuſe it, when it ſeemed to be preſented to him by the providence of GOD, and was brought about in ſo ſtrange a manner; and when by this means he might probably have had it in his power to have eaſed the Iſraelites of their cruel bondage, and perhaps have had the opportunity of reducing that great kingdom from the worſhip of idols to the true GOD? why would he refuſe a kingdom which was offered to him with ſo fair an opportunity of doing ſo much good?

That which ſeems to have prevailed with Moſes, was this, that he could not accept the offer without forſaking GOD, and renouncing his religion; for conſidering how ſtrangely the Egyptians were addicted to idolatry, he could never hope to be accepted for heir of that kingdom, unleſs he would violate his conſcience, either by abandoning or diſſembling his religion.

And how unlikely it was, that he ſhould prevail with them to change their religion, he might eaſily judge by the example of Joſeph, who, tho' he had ſo much authority and eſteem amongſt them, by having been ſo great a benefactor to their nation;

yet

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yet he could never move them in the leaſt in that matter.

Now ſeeing he had no hopes of attaining, or enjoying that dignity, without ſinning grievouſly againſt GOD, he would not purchaſe a kingdom at ſo unconſcionable a price. And as for the deliverance of his people, he was content to truſt the providence and promiſe of GOD for that; and in the mean time was reſolved rather to take a part in the afflictions of GOD's people, "than to enjoy the "pleaſures of ſin for a ſeaſon."

From the words thus explained, I ſhall take occaſion to conſider theſe four things.

I. Moſes's ſelf-denial, in preferring and chooſing a ſtate of afflicted piety, before any ſinful enjoyments whatſoever, before the greateſt earthly happineſs and proſperity, when it was not to be attained and enjoyed upon other terms than of ſinning againſt GOD.

II. I ſhall conſider thoſe circumſtances of this ſelf-denial of Moſes, which do very much commend and ſet off the virtue of it.

III. The prudence and reaſonableneſs of this choice, in preferring a ſtate of afflicted piety and virtue, before the greateſt proſperity and pleaſure of a ſinful courſe.

IV. Suppoſing this choice to be reaſonable, I ſhall enquire how it comes to paſs, that ſo many make another choice.

I. We will conſider Moſes his ſelf-denial, in preferring a ſtate of afflicted piety before the greateſt earthly happineſs and proſperity, when it is not to be enjoyed

enjoyed upon other terms, than of ſinning againſt GOD. He was adopted heir of the kingdom of Egypt, (one of the greateſt and moſt flouriſhing kingdoms then in the world;) but he could not hope to attain to this dignity, and to ſecure himſelf in the poſſeſſion of it, upon other terms than of complying with that nation, in their idolatrous religion and worſhip.

Now being brought up in the belief of the true GOD, the GOD of Iſrael, by his mother, to whom Pharaoh's daughter had committed him, he could not, without great violence to his conſcience, and the principles of his education, renounce the true GOD, and fall off to the idolatry of the Egyptians: and for this reaſon "he refuſed to be called the ſon "of Pharaoh's daughter, chooſing rather to ſuffer "affliction with the worſhippers of the true GOD," than to have the temporary enjoyment of any thing that was not to be had without ſin; for ſo the word ought to be render'd, ἢ πρόσκαιρον ἔχειν ἁμαρτίας ἀπόλαυσιν, "than to have the temporary enjoy-"ment of ſin." So here was Moſes his ſelf-denial, that he choſe rather to ſuffer affliction with the worſhippers of the true GOD, than to gain a kingdom, by the renouncing of GOD and religion.

II. We will conſider thoſe circumſtances of his ſelf-denial, which do very much commend and ſet off the virtue of it.

1. What it was he refuſed to be called; "the ſon "of Pharaoh's daughter;" that is, to be the heir of one of the greateſt and moſt flouriſhing kingdoms in the world: a temptation ſo great, that the devil him-

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himſelf could not find out one much greater, when he ſet upon the ſon of GOD to tempt him to fall down and worſhip him.

And when we conſider for what inconſiderable things ſome men ſell their religion and their conſciences, we ſhall think it no ſmall temptation which Moſes here reſiſted. *Si violandum eſt jus, regnandi cauſâ violandum eſt* ; "If a man would do any unjuſt "thing, and violate his religion and conſcience, he "would not do it for leſs than a kingdom ; and it "would be a very hard bargain, even upon thoſe "terms."

2. Conſider not only what he refuſed, but what he choſe in the place of it ; a ſtate of great affliction and ſuffering. Had he refuſed a kingdom, and choſen the quiet condition of a ſubject of middle rank (beneath envy and above contempt) his ſelf-denial had not been ſo great ; nay, perhaps he had made a wiſe choice, in the account of the wiſeſt men, in preferring a plentiful and quiet retirement, before the cares of a crown, and the burden of publick government.

But it is very rare to find a Man that would chooſe rather to be oppreſt and perſecuted, than to be a prince, and to have the ſweet power to uſe others as he pleaſed.

3. Conſider how fair a proſpect he had of enjoying this kingdom, if he could but have come up to the terms of it. He did not reject it, becauſe he deſpaired of attaining it : for he had all the right that a good title could give him, being adopted heir to it ; and yet he refuſed it.

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To which I may add, that his breeding was such as might eaſily kindle ambitious thoughts in him. He was brought up in Pharaoh's court, and was the darling and favourite of it; exceeding beautiful (as Joſephus tells us) "and learned in all the wiſdom "of the Egyptians;" than which, no two qualities are more apt to puff up and ſwell a man with big thoughts of himſelf.

They that are bred in a low condition, never think of a kingdom; men not being apt to aſpire to things which are remote, and at a great diſtance from them.

But nothing is more rare in perſons of great and generous minds, than ſuch a ſelf-denial as this.

4. Let it be conſidered, in the laſt place, that this was a deliberate choice, not any raſh and ſudden determination made by him when he was of incompetent age to make a true judgment of things. And this the apoſtle takes notice of in the text, as a very memorable circumſtance, "that when he was come to "years, he refuſed to be called the ſon of Pha-"raoh's daughter." And St. Stephen tells us, that he was full forty years old when he made this choice, Acts vii. 23. "When he was full forty years "old, it came into his heart to viſit his brethren the "children of Iſrael." When he was of ripeſt judgment, and in the height of his proſperity and reputation, he made this choice; for it is ſaid in the verſe before, "that Moſes was learned in all "the wiſdom of the Egyptians, and mighty in "word and deed;" that is, he was in great reputation for his wiſdom and valour.

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This ſeems to refer to other paſſages of his life, which are not recorded in the ſcripture hiſtory, but related at large by Joſephus, out of hiſtorians extant in his time. For he tells, that when the Ethiopians had invaded Egypt, and almoſt over-run it, Pharaoh was directed by the oracle at Memphis, to make Moſes his general, who by his extraordinary conduct and courage overthrew the Ethiopians, and drave them out of Egypt.

This Moſes did not think fit to relate of himſelf; but St. Stephen ſeems to allude to it, when he ſays, "that he was mighty in word and deed:" And then it follows; "and when he was full forty years "old, it came in his heart to viſit his brethren, the "children of Iſrael;" that is, when he was at full maturity of judgment, and in the height of his proſperity and reputation, he quitted the court of Egypt, and went to viſit his afflicted brethren, and choſe rather to take part with them in their ſufferings, than to accept thoſe great offers that were made to him.

There is likewiſe another paſſage in Joſephus concerning Moſes, which ſeems to be a forerunner of the contempt which he ſhewed afterwards of the crown of Egypt; that when Moſes was about three years old, Thermuſis, the daughter of Pharaoh, brought the child to him, who took him in his arms, and put his diadem upon his head; but Moſes took it off, and caſt it to the ground, and trampled it under his feet. This was but a childiſh act, and they who ſaw it, would eaſily believe, that, for all his childiſh contempt of it then, if it were put upon his

head

head in good earneſt, when he came to be a man, he would hold it on faſter, and uſe it with more reſpect. SERM. LVII.

And it is not improbable, but that the apoſtle might have ſome regard to this, when he ſays, "that "Moſes when he comes to years;" intimating that he did not only trample upon the diadem of Pharaoh, when he was a child; but when he was come to years, and was capable of judging better of thoſe things, "he refuſed to be called the ſon of Pha- "raoh's daughter."

But before I proceed any farther, I cannot but take notice of an objection, which may ſeem to reflect greatly upon the integrity of Moſes. Can we think him ſo very conſcientious a man, who perſuaded the people of Iſrael, and pretended GOD's direction in the caſe, to cheat the Egyptians of their jewels under a fraudulent pretence of borrowing them? There is ſome difficulty in the thing, as at firſt ſight it appears: and yet I doubt not, with your favourable attention, and free from prejudice, to vindicate Moſes clearly in this matter.

And I ſhall not inſiſt upon that which is commonly and truly ſaid in this caſe; that GOD, who is the ſupreme LORD of all things, may transfer the rights of men from one to another: becauſe the objection doth not lie againſt GOD's right to take away from any man what he hath given him; but againſt the fraudulent manner of doing it, which ſeems unworthy of GOD to command or encourage.

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Now this matter, I think, is capable of another and much clearer anſwer; which in ſhort is this, and grounded upon the hiſtory, as we find it related, Exod. xii. The providence of GOD did, it ſeems, deſign by this way to make ſome reparation to the Iſraelites, for the tyrannical uſage which they had received from the Egyptians; and that firſt (as the text expreſly tells us) "in giving them favour "with the Egyptians," who in truth, for their own ends, and to get rid of ſuch troubleſome gueſts, were diſpoſed to lend them any thing they had.

Thus far all is right; here is nothing but fair borrowing and lending: and if the Iſraelites acquired a right to thoſe things afterwards, there was then no obligation to reſtitution.

Let us ſee then how the providence of GOD brought this about: namely, by permitting the Egyptians afterwards, without cauſe, and after leave given them to depart, to purſue them, with a deſign to have deſtroyed them; by which hoſtility and perfidiouſneſs they plainly forfeited their right to what they had only lent before. For this hoſtile attempt, which would have warranted the Iſraelites to have ſpoiled them of their jewels, if they had been in the poſſeſſion of the Egyptians, did certainly warrant them to keep them when they had them; and by this means they became rightful poſſeſſors of what they had only by loan before, and could not have detained without fraud and injuſtice, if this hoſtility of the Egyptians had not given them a new title and clear right to them.

But

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But I proceed to the third thing I propoſed, which was to vindicate the prudence and reaſonableneſs of this choice. And in ſpeaking to this, I ſhall abſtract from the particular caſe of Moſes, and ſhew in general, "that it is a prudent and reaſonable "thing, to prefer even an afflicted ſtate of piety "and virtue, before the greateſt pleaſures and pro- "ſperity of a ſinful courſe:" and this will appear, if we conſider theſe two things.

I. The ſufferings of good men upon account of religion, together with the reward of them.

II. The temporary enjoyment of ſin, with the miſchiefs and inconveniencies conſequent upon them.

I. The ſufferings of good men upon the account of religion, together with the reward of them. This Moſes had in his eye, when he made this choice; for therefore "he choſe to ſuffer affliction with the "people of God, rather than to enjoy the pleaſures "of ſin which are but for a ſeaſon, becauſe he "had reſpect to the recompence of reward." And tho' he had but a very imperfect diſcovery in compariſon of the future ſtate; yet, it ſeems, he had ſo much aſſurance of the goodneſs of God, as firmly to believe, that he ſhould be no loſer at the laſt, by any thing that he ſuffered for God and religion.

Indeed, if there were no life after this, and we had no expectation beyond this world, the wiſeſt thing we could do, would be to enjoy as much of the preſent contentment of this world, as we could make ourſelves maſters of. But if we be deſigned for

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for immortality, and ſhall be unſpeakably happy; or intolerably miſerable in another world, according as we have demeaned ourſelves in this life; then certainly it is reaſonable, that we ſhould take the greateſt care of the longeſt duration, and be content to diſpenſe with ſome preſent inconveniencies for an eternal felicity; and be willing to labour and take pains for a little while, that we may be happy for ever. And this is accounted prudence in the account of the wiſeſt men, to part with a little in preſent, for a far greater future advantage.

But the diſproportion betwixt time and eternity is ſo vaſt, that did we but firmly believe, that we ſhall live for ever, nothing in this world could reaſonably be thought too good to part withal, or too grievous to ſuffer, for the obtaining of a bleſſed immortality. And upon this belief and perſuaſion of a mighty reward, beyond all their preſent ſufferings, and that they ſhould be infinite gainers at the laſt, the primitive chriſtians were kept from ſinking under their preſent ſufferings, and fortified againſt all that the malice and cruelty of the world could do unto them. And if we would conſider all things together, and mind the inviſible things of another world, as well as the things which are ſeen, we ſhould eaſily diſcern, that he who ſuffers for God and religion does not renounce his happineſs, but put it out to intereſt upon terms of greateſt advantage, and does wiſely conſider his own beſt and moſt laſting intereſt. This is the firſt.

II. This will yet more evidently appear, if we conſider the temporary enjoyments of ſin, together with

with the miſchiefs and inconveniencies attending, and conſequent upon them; that as to the nature of them, they are mix'd and imperfect; as to the duration of them, they are ſhort, and but for a ſeaſon; as to the final iſſue and conſequence of them, that they end in miſery and ſorrow. SERM. LVII.

1. As to the nature of them, all the pleaſures and enjoyments of ſin are mix'd and imperfect. A wicked man may make a ſhew of mirth and pleaſure, "but even in laughter his heart is ſorrowful, and "the end of that mirth is heavineſs." There can be no true and ſincere pleaſure in any ſinful and vicious courſe, tho' it be attended with all the pomp and ſplendor of outward happineſs and proſperity; for wherever ſin and vice is, there muſt be guilt; and wherever guilt is, the mind will be reſtleſs and unquiet.

For there are two very troubleſome and tormenting paſſions, which are naturally conſequent upon guilt; ſhame and fear: ſhame, ariſing from the apprehenſion of the danger of being diſcovered; and fear, from the apprehenſion of the danger of being puniſhed: and theſe do continually haunt the ſinner, and fill him with inward horror and confuſion in his moſt ſecret retirements. And if ſin were attended with no other trouble but the guilt of it, a wiſe man would not commit it, if it were for no other reaſon, but merely for the peace and quiet of his own mind.

2. The enjoyments of ſin as to the duration of them, are but ſhort. Upon this conſideration, Moſes ſet no price and value upon them, but preferred

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ferred affliction and ſuffering in good company, and in a good cauſe, before "the temporary enjoy-"ments of ſin."

If the enjoyments of this world were perfect in their nature, and had no mixture of trouble and ſorrow in them; yet this would be a great abatement of them, that they are of ſo ſhort and uncertain a continuance. The pleaſure of moſt ſins expires with the act of them; and when that is done, the delight vaniſheth.

I cannot deny but that there are ſeveral worldly advantages to be purchaſed by ſin, which may perhaps be of a longer continuance; as riches and honours, the common purchaſe of covetouſneſs and ambition, and of that long train of inferior vices which attend upon them, and miniſter unto them: but even thoſe enjoyments are, in their own nature, of an uncertain continuance, and much more uncertain for being purchaſed by indirect and ill means. But if the enjoyment of theſe things were ſure to be of the ſame date with our lives; yet how ſhort a duration is that, compared with eternity? make the utmoſt allowance to theſe things, that can be, yet we can but enjoy them whilſt we are in this world. When we come into the world of ſpirits, it will ſignify nothing to us to have been rich or great in this world. When we ſhall ſtand before that higheſt tribunal, it will not avail us in the leaſt to have been princes, and great men, and judges on the earth; the pooreſt man that ever lived in this world, will then be upon equal terms with the biggeſt of us all.

For

For all mankind ſhall then ſtand upon a level, and thoſe civil diſtinctions of rich and poor, of baſe and honourable, which ſeem now ſo conſiderable, and make ſuch a glaring difference amongſt men in this world, ſhall all then be laid aſide, and moral differences ſhall only take place. All the diſtinctions which will then be made, will be betwixt the good and the bad, the righteous and the wicked; and the difference betwixt a good and bad man, will be really much greater, than ever it ſeemed to be betwixt the higheſt and meaneſt perſons in this world. SERM. LVII.

And if this be ſo, why ſhould we value the enjoyments of ſin at ſo high a rate, which, at the beſt, are only conſiderable (and that only in the imagination of vain men) during our abode in this world; but bear no price at all in that country where we muſt live for ever: or if they did, we cannot carry them along with us. The guilt of them, indeed, will follow us with a vengeance; the injuſtice and all the ill arts we have uſed for the getting or keeping of them, eſpecially, if at once we have "made ſhipwreck of faith and a good conſcience."

If we have changed our religion, or, which is much worſe, if continuing in the profeſſion of it, we have betrayed it, and the intereſt of it, for the gaining or ſecuring of any of theſe things; we ſhall find, to our ſorrow, that tho' "the enjoyments "of ſin were but for a ſeaſon," the guilt of it will never leave us nor forſake us; but will ſtick cloſe to us, and make us miſerable for ever. But this belongs to the

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IIId Thing I propoſed to ſpeak to, namely, the final iſſue and conſequence of a ſinful courſe, which is miſery and ſorrow, many times in this world; but moſt certainly in the next.

1. In this world, the very beſt iſſue and conſequence of a ſinful courſe, that we can imagine, is repentance: and even this hath a great deal of ſenſible pain and trouble in it; for it is many times (eſpecially after great ſins, and a long continuance in them,) accompanied with much regret and horror; with deep and piercing ſorrow; with diſmal and deſpairing thoughts of God's mercy; and with fearful apprhenſions of his wrath and vengeance. So that, if this were the worſt conſequence of ſin, (which indeed is the beſt) no man that conſiders and calculates things wiſely, would purchaſe the pleaſure of any ſin, at the price of ſo much anguiſh and ſorrow as a true and deep repentance will coſt him; eſpecially, ſince a true repentance does, in many caſes, oblige men to the reſtitution of that which hath been gained by ſin, if it been hath got by the injury of another.

And this conſideration quite takes away the pleaſure and profit of an ill-gotten eſtate. Better never to have had it, than to be obliged to refund it. A wiſe man will forbear the moſt pleaſant meats, if he know before-hand that they will make him deadly ſick, and that he ſhall never be at eaſe, till he have brought them up again.

No man that believes the threatnings of God, and the judgments of another world, would ever ſin,

ſin, but that he hopes to retrieve all again by repentance. But it is the greateſt folly in the world to commit any ſin upon this hope: for that is to pleaſe ones ſelf for the preſent, in hopes to have more trouble afterwards than the pleaſure comes to. But, eſpecially no man would be guilty of an act of injuſtice and oppreſſion, in hopes to repent of it afterwards; becauſe there can be no repentance for ſuch ſins without reſtitution; and 'tis perfect madneſs for a man to run the hazard of his ſoul, to get an eſtate, in hopes of reſtoring it again; for ſo he muſt do that truly repents of ſuch a ſin. But,

2. In the other world, the final iſſue and conſequence of all the pleaſures of ſin unrepented of, will certainly be miſery and ſorrow. How quietly ſoever a ſinner may paſs through this world, or out of it, miſery will certainly overtake him in the next, unſpeakable and eternal miſery, ariſing from an apprehenſion of the greateſt loſs, and a ſenſe of the ſharpeſt pain; and thoſe ſadly aggravated by the remembrance of paſt pleaſure, and the deſpair of future eaſe.

From a ſad apprehenſion and melancholy reflexion upon his ineſtimable loſs. In the other world the ſinner ſhall be eternally ſeparated from God, who is the fountain of happineſs. This is the firſt part of that miſerable ſentence which ſhall be paſt upon the wicked; "depart from me."

Sinners are not now ſenſible of the joys of heaven, and the happineſs of that ſtate, and therefore are not capable of eſtimating the greatneſs of ſuch

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a loſs: but this ſtupidity and inſenſibleneſs of ſinners, continues only during this preſent ſtate, which affords men variety of objects and pleaſures to divert and entertain them; but when they are once enter'd upon the other world, they will then have nothing elſe to take up their thoughts, but the ſad condition, into which by their own wilful negligence and folly they have plunged themſelves. They ſhall then lift up their eyes, and with the rich man in the parable, at once ſee the happineſs of others, and feel their own miſery and torment.

But this is not all. Beſides the apprehenſion of ſo great a loſs, they ſhall be ſenſible of the ſoreſt and ſharpeſt pains; and how grievous thoſe ſhall be we may conjecture by what the ſcripture ſays of them in general; that they are the effects of a mighty diſpleaſure, of anger and omnipotence met together, far greater than can be deſcribed by any pains and ſufferings which we are acquainted withal in this world: "for who knows the power of GOD's "anger," and the utmoſt of what omnipotent juſtice can do to ſinners? "It is a fearful thing to "fall into the hands of the living GOD."

One would think, this were miſery enough, and needed no farther aggravation: but yet it hath two terrible ones; from the remembrance of paſt pleaſures, and the deſpair of any future eaſe and remedy.

The remembrance of paſt pleaſure makes preſent ſufferings more ſharp and ſenſible. For as nothing commends pleaſure more, and gives a quicker reliſh to happineſs, than precedent pain and ſuffering:

ing: (for perhaps there is not a greater pleaſure in the world, than in the ſudden eaſe which a man finds after a ſharp fit of the ſtone) ſo nothing enrageth affliction more, and ſets a keener edge upon miſery, than to paſs into great pain immediately out of a ſtate of eaſe and pleaſure. This was the ſtinging aggravation of the rich man's torment, "that in his life-time he had received his good "things, and had fared ſo deliciouſly every day."

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But the greateſt aggravation of all is, the deſpair of any future eaſe and remedy. The duration of this miſery is ſet forth to us in ſcripture, by ſuch expreſſions as do ſignify the longeſt and moſt interminable duration, "depart ye curſed into ever-"laſting fire, Matth. xxv. and Mark ix. 43. where "the worm dies not, and the fire is not quench-"ed." And in the Revelation it is ſaid, "that "the wicked ſhall be tormented, day and night, "for ever and ever;" without intermiſſion, and without end. And this ſurely is the perfection of miſery, for a man to lie under the greateſt torments, and to be in deſpair of ever finding the leaſt eaſe.

Let us now compare things together; on the one hand, the ſufferings of good men, for a good conſcience, and the reward that follows them; and on the other hand, the enjoyments of ſin, and the miſchief and miſery that attend them, and will certainly overtake them in this world, or in the next: and then we ſhall eaſily diſcern which of theſe is to be preferred in a wiſe man's choice.

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And indeed the choice is ſo very plain, that a man muſt be very ſtrangely forſaken of his reaſon, and blinded by ſenſe, who does not prefer that courſe of life, which will probably make him happier in this world, but moſt certainly in the next.

IV. There remains now only the fourth and laſt particular to be ſpoken to; viz. ſuppoſing this choice to be reaſonable, to enquire whence it comes to paſs that ſo many make a quite contrary choice. How is it, that the greateſt part of mankind are ſo widely miſtaken, as to prefer the temporary enjoyments of ſin before conſcience and religion; eſpecially, if it be attended with great afflictions and ſufferings? and of this, I ſhall give you as brief an account as I can, and ſo conclude this diſcourſe.

This wrong choice generally proceeds from one or both of theſe two cauſes; from want of faith; or from want of conſideration; or of both.

1. One great reaſon why men make ſo imprudent a choice, is unbelief; either the want of faith, or the weakneſs of it. Either men do not believe the recompences of another life, or they are not ſo firmly perſuaded of the reality of them. If men do not at all believe theſe things, there is no foundation for religion; "for he that cometh unto God "(that is, he that thinks of being religious) "muſt believe that God is, and that he is a re-"warder of them that diligently ſeek him," as the apoſtle reaſons in the beginning of this chapter.

But I hope, there are but few that are, or can be infidels, as to theſe great and fundamental principles of religion. But it is to be feared, that the faith

faith of a great many is but weak and wavering; their faith is rather negative; they do not disbelieve theſe things, but they are not firmly perſuaded of them; their faith is rather an opinion, than a rooted and well-grounded perſuaſion; and therefore no wonder, if it be not ſo ſtrong and vigorous a principle of action, like the faith of Abraham and Moſes, and other worthies mentioned in this chapter. For where faith is in its full ſtrength and vigour, it will have proportionable effects upon the reſolutions and wills of men: but where it is but weak, it is of little or no efficacy. And this is the true reaſon, why ſo many forſake religion, and cleave to this preſent world; and when it comes to the puſh, chooſe rather to ſin, than to ſuffer; and will rather quit the truth, than endure perſecution for it.

Theſe are they whom our SAVIOUR deſcribes, "who receive the word with joy, and endure for a "while; but when tribulation and perſecution a-"riſeth becauſe of the word, preſently they are "offended:" not that they did not believe the word; but their faith had taken no deep root, and therefore it withered. The weakneſs and wavering of mens faith, makes them unſtable and inconſtant in their courſe; becauſe they are not of one mind, but divided betwixt two intereſts, that of this world, and the other; "and the double-"minded man (as St. James tells us) is unſtable in "all his ways."

It is generally a true rule; ſo much wavering as we ſee in the actions and lives of men, ſo much weakneſs there is in their faith; and therefore

he

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he that would know what any man firmly believes, let him attend to his actions more than to his profeſſions.

If any man live ſo as no man that heartily believes the chriſtian religion can live, it is not credible, that ſuch a man doth firmly believe the chriſtian religion. He ſays he does; but there is a greater evidence in the caſe than words; there is *teſtimonium rei*, the man's actions are to the contrary, and they do beſt declare the inward ſenſe of the man. Did men firmly believe, that there is a GOD that governs the world, "and that he hath appointed a "day, wherein he will judge it in righteouſneſs;" and that all mankind ſhall ſhortly appear before him, and give an account of themſelves, and all their actions to him; and that thoſe "who have kept "the faith and a good conſcience, and have lived "ſoberly, and righteouſly, and godly in this preſent "world," ſhall be unſpeakably and eternally happy; "but the fearful and unbelieving," thoſe who out of fear or intereſt, have deſerted the faith, or lived wicked lives, "ſhall have their portion in the lake, "which burns with fire and brimſtone;" I ſay, were men firmly perſuaded of theſe things, it is hardly credible that any man ſhould make a wrong choice, and forſake the ways of truth and righteouſneſs, upon any temptation whatſoever.

Faith, even in temporal matters, is a mighty principle of action, and will make men to attempt and undergo ſtrange and difficult things. The faith of the goſpel ought to be much more operative and powerful, becauſe the objects of hope and fear, which

which it presents to us, are far greater, and more considerable, than any thing that this world can tempt or terrify us withal.

Would we but by faith make present to our minds, the invisible things of another world, the happiness of heaven, and the terrors of hell; and were we as verily persuaded of them, as if they were in our view; how should we despise all the pleasures and terrors of this world; and with what ease should we resist and repel all those temptations, which would seduce us from our duty, or draw us into sin!

A firm and unshaken belief of these things, would effectually remove all those mountains of difficulty and discouragement, which men fancy to themselves in the ways of religion. "To him that "believeth, all things are possible," and most things would be easy.

2. Another reason of this wrong choice is want of consideration; for this would strengthen our faith, and make it more vigorous and powerful: and indeed a faith which is well rooted and established doth suppose a wise and deep consideration of things; and the want of this is a great cause of the fatal miscarriage of men; that they do not sit down and consider with themselves seriously, how much religion is their interest, and how much it will cost them to be true to it, and to persevere in it to the end.

We suffer our selves to be governed by sense, and to be transported with present things; but do not consider our future and lasting interest, and the

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whole duration of an immortal ſoul. And this is the reaſon, why ſo man many are hurried away by the preſent and ſenſible delights of this world, becauſe they will not take time to think of what will be hereafter.

For it is not to be imagined, but that the man who hath ſeriouſly conſidered what ſin is, the ſhortneſs of its pleaſure, and the eternity of its puniſhment, ſhould reſolve to forſake ſin, and to live a holy and virtuous life.

To conclude this whole diſcourſe. If men did but ſeriouſly believe the great principles of religion; the being and the providence of GOD; the immortality of their ſouls; the glorious rewards, and the dreadful puniſhments of another world, they could not poſſibly make ſo imprudent a choice, as we ſee a great part of mankind to do, they could not be induced to forſake GOD and religion for any temporal intereſt and advantage; to renounce the favour of heaven, and all their hopes of happineſs in another world, for any thing that this world can afford; nay not for the whole world, if it were offered to them. For as our SAVIOUR reaſons in this very caſe, of forſaking our religion for any temporal intereſt, or conſideration; "what is a man profited if he "gain the whole world, and loſe his own ſoul? "or what ſhall a man give in exchange for his "ſoul?

Whenever any of us are tempted in this kind; let that ſolemn declaration of our SAVIOUR and our judge be continually in our minds; "he that con-"feſſeth me before men, him will I confeſs alſo

before

" before my father which is in heaven: but who-
" ſoever ſhall be aſhamed of me and of my words
" in this adulterous and ſinful generation, of him
" ſhall the ſon of man be aſhamed, when he ſhall
" come in the glory of his father, with his holy
" angels."

And we have great cauſe to thank GOD, to ſee ſo many in this day of trial, and hour of temptation, to adhere with ſo much reſolution and conſtancy to their holy religion, and to prefer " the keeping " of faith, and a good conſcience," to all earthly conſiderations and advantages.

And this very thing, that ſo many hold their religion ſo faſt, and are ſo loth to part with it, gives great hopes that they intend to make good uſe of it, and to frame their lives according to the holy rules and precepts of it; which alone can give us peace, whilſt we live, and comfort when we come to die; and after death ſecure to us the poſſeſſion of a happineſs large as our wiſhes, and laſting as our ſouls.

" To which, GOD of his infinite goodneſs bring
" us all, for his mercy's ſake, in JESUS CHRIST:
" to whom, with the FATHER, and the HOLY
" GHOST, be all honour and glory, world without
" end. Amen."

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Of conſtancy in the profeſſion of the true religion.

HEB. x, 23.

Let us hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith without wavering; for he is faithful that promiſed.

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THE main ſcope and deſign of this epiſtle to the Hebrews is to perſuade the Jews, who were newly converted to chriſtianity, to continue ſtedfaſt in the profeſſion of that holy and excellent religion which they had embraced; and not to be removed from it, either by the ſubtile inſinuations of their brethren the Jews, who pretended that they were in poſſeſſion of the true ancient religion, and the only true church of GOD upon earth; or by the terror of the heathen perſecution, which was ſo hot againſt them at that time. And to this end the author of this epiſtle doth by great variety of arguments demonſtrate the excellency of the chriſtian religion above the jewiſh diſpenſation; and ſhews at large, that in all thoſe reſpects upon which the Jews valued themſelves and their religion (as namely upon the account of their lawgiver, their high-prieſts, and their ſacrifices) the chriſtian religion had every way the advantage of them.

And

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And having made this clear, he concludes with an earneſt exhortation to them to continue ſtedfaſt in the profeſſion of this excellent religion, which was revealed to them by the SON of GOD, the true propitiatory ſacrifice, and the great high-prieſt of their profeſſion, and into which they had ſolemnly been initiated and admitted by baptiſm; ver. 19, 20, 21, 22. "Having therefore, brethren, boldneſs to enter "into the holieſt, by the blood of JESUS, by a new "and living way, which he hath conſecrated for us "through the vail, that is to ſay, his fleſh; and hav- "ing an high-prieſt over the houſe of GOD; let us "draw near with a true heart, in full aſſurance of "faith," that is, let us ſincerely ſerve GOD with a firm perſuaſion of the truth and excellency of this holy religion, into the profeſſion whereof we were ſolemnly admitted by baptiſm; for that is undoubtedly the meaning of the following words; "having "our hearts ſprinkled from an evil conſcience, and "our bodies waſhed with pure water;" the water, with which our bodies are waſhed in baptiſm, ſignifying our ſpiritual regeneration, "and the purging "our conſciences from dead works, to ſerve the liv- "ing GOD." From all which he concludes, "let "us hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith without wa- "vering:" This refers to that ſolemn profeſſion of faith, which was made by all chriſtians at their baptiſm, and which is contained in the ancient creed of the chriſtian church, called by the ancient fathers, "the rule of faith."

Let us hold faſt, κατέχωμεν, let us firmly retain; the ſame with κρατῶμεν τῆς ὁμολογίας, chap. iv. 14. "Seeing then we have a great high-prieſt which is "paſſed

SERM. LVIII. " paſſed into the heavens, JESUS the SON of GOD, " let us take faſt hold of our profeſſion." So here in the text, the apoſtle upon the ſame conſideration exhorts chriſtians to retain or hold faſt, τὴν ὁμολογίαν τῆς ἐλπίδος, the confeſſion, or profeſſion of their hope; that is, the hope of the reſurrection of the dead, and everlaſting life, which was the concluſion of that faith or creed, whereof in baptiſm they made a ſolemn profeſſion. " Let us hold faſt the profeſ- " ſion of our faith or hope, without wavering;" the word is ἀκλινῆ, inflexible, unmoveable, ſteady, and not apt to waver and be ſhaken by every wind of contrary doctrine, nor by the blaſts and ſtorms of perſecution. " For he is faithful that hath promiſed." If we continue faithful and ſteady to GOD, he will be faithful to make good all the promiſes he hath made to us.

In the words thus explained, there are two things which I ſhall diſtinctly conſider.

Firſt, the exhortation; " let us hold faſt the pro- " feſſion of our faith, without wavering:" and,

Secondly, the argument or encouragement uſed to enforce it; " he is faithful that promiſed." I begin with the

Firſt, the exhortation, to be conſtant and ſteady in the profeſſion of the chriſtian religion; " let us " hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith without wa- " vering." In the handling of this, and that we may the better underſtand the true meaning of this exhortation here in the text, I ſhall do theſe two things.

I. I ſhall ſhew negatively, wherein this conſtancy and ſteadineſs in the profeſſion of the true religion does

does not conſiſt. And here I ſhall remove one or two things which are thought by ſome to be inconſiſtent with conſtancy and ſtedfaſtneſs in religion. SERM. LVIII.

II. I ſhall ſhew poſitively, what is implied in a conſtant and ſteady profeſſion of the true religion.

I. I ſhall ſhew negatively, what conſtancy and ſteadfaſtneſs in the profeſſion of the true religion does not imply. And there are two things which are thought by ſome to be implied, "in holding faſt the "profeſſion of our faith without wavering."

Firſt, that men ſhould not take the liberty to examine their religion, and enquire into the grounds and reaſons of it.

Secondly, that men ſhould obſtinately refuſe to hear any reaſons that can be brought againſt the true religion, as they think, which they have once entertained.

Firſt, that men ſhould not take the liberty to examine their religion, and to enquire into the grounds and reaſons of it. This, I think, is ſo far from being forbidden in this exhortation; that, on the contrary, I doubt not to make it appear, that a free and impartial enquiry into the grounds and reaſons of our religion, and a thorough trial and examination of them, is one of the beſt means to confirm and eſtabliſh us in the profeſſion of it: I mean, that all perſons that are capable of it ſhould do it, and that they will find great benefit and advantage by it. For I do not think, that this is a duty equally and indifferently incumbent upon all; nor indeed fit and proper for all perſons; becauſe all are not equally capable of doing it. There are two ſorts of perſons that are in a great meaſure incapable of doing it.

1. Children. 2. Such

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2. Such grown perſons as are of a very mean and low capacity, and improvement of underſtanding.

Children are not fit to examine, but only to learn and believe what is taught them by their parents and teachers. They are fit to have the fear of GOD, and the principles of the true religion, inſtilled into them: but they are by no means fit to diſcern between a true and falſe religion, and to chooſe for themſelves, and to make a change of their religion; as hath of late been allowed to them in a nation not far from us, and by publick edict declared, that children at ſeven years old, are fit to chooſe and to change their religion: which is the firſt law I ever heard of, that allows children at that age to do any act for themſelves, that is of conſequence and importance to them, for the remaining parts of their lives, and which they ſhall ſtand obliged to perform and make good. They are indeed baptized, according to the cuſtom and uſage of the chriſtian church, in their infancy: but they do not enter into this obligation themſelves; but their ſureties undertake for them, that when they come to age, they ſhall take this promiſe upon themſelves, and confirm and make it good. But ſurely, they can do no act for themſelves, and in their own name, at that age, which can be obligatory. They can neither make any contracts that ſhall be valid, nor incur any debt, nor oblige themſelves by any promiſe, nor chooſe themſelves a guardian, nor do any act that may bring them under an inconvenience, when they ſhall come at age. And can we think them of diſcretion ſufficient at that time, to do a thing of the greateſt moment and conſequence of all other; and which will concern them

them to all eternity; namely, to chooſe their religion? There is indeed one part of one religion (which we all know) which children at ſeven years of age are fit (I do not ſay to judge of, but) to be as fond of, and to practiſe to as good purpoſe as thoſe of riper years; and that is, to worſhip images, to tell their beads, to ſay their prayers, and to be preſent at the ſervice of GOD in an unknown tongue; and this they are more likely to chooſe at that age, than thoſe who are of riper and more improved underſtandings; and if they do not chooſe it at that time, it is ten to one, they will not chooſe it afterwards. I ſhall ſay no more of this, but that it is a very extraordinary law, and ſuch as perhaps was never thought of before, from the beginning of the world. Thus much for children. SERM. LVIII.

2. As for grown perſons, who are of a very low and mean capacity of underſtanding, and either by reaſon of the weakneſs of their faculties, or other diſadvantages which they lie under, are in little or no probability of improving themſelves: theſe are always to be conſidered as in the condition of children and learners, and therefore muſt of neceſſity, in things, which are not plain and obvious to the meaneſt capacities, truſt and rely upon the judgment of others. And it is really much wiſer and ſafer for them ſo to do, than to depend upon their own judgments, and to lean to their own underſtandings; and ſuch perſons, if they be modeſt and humble, and pray earneſtly to GOD for his aſſiſtance and direction, and are careful to practiſe what they know, and to live up to the beſt light and knowledge which they have, ſhall not miſcarry merely for want of thoſe farther

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degrees of knowledge which they had no capacity nor opportunity to attain; because their ignorance is unavoidable, and GOD will require no more of them than he hath given them, and will not call them to account for the improvement of those talents, which he never committed to them. And if they be led into any dangerous error, by the negligence or ill conduct of those, under whose care and instruction the providence of GOD permitted them to be placed, GOD will not impute it to them as a fault; because in the circumstances in which they were, they took the best and wisest course that they could, to come to the knowledge of the truth, by being willing to learn what they could of those whom they took to be wiser than themselves.

But for such persons, who by the maturity of their age, and by the natural strength and clearness of their understandings, or by the due exercise and improvement of them, are capable of enquiring into, and understanding the grounds of their religion, and discerning the difference betwixt truth and error (I do not mean in unnecessary points, and matters of deepest learning and speculation, but in matters necessary to salvation) it is certainly very reasonable, that such persons should examine their religion, and understand the reasons and grounds of it.

And this must either be granted to be reasonable, or else every man must continue in that religion in which he happens to be fixed by education, or for any other reason to pitch upon, when he comes to years, and makes his free choice. For if this be a good principle, that no man is to examine his religion,

religion, but take it as it is, and to believe it, and reſt ſatisfied with it; then every man is to remain in the religion which he firſt lights upon, whether by choice or the chance of his education. For he ought not to change but upon reaſon; and reaſon he can have none, unleſs he be allowed to examine his religion, and to compare it with others, that by the compariſon he may diſcern which is beſt, and ought in reaſon to be preferred in his choice. For to him that will not, or is not permitted to ſearch into the grounds of any religion, all religions are alike; as all things are of the ſame colour to him that is always kept in the dark; or if he happens to come into the light, dares not open his eyes, and make uſe of them to diſcern the different colours of things.

But this is evidently, and at firſt ſight unreaſonable; becauſe at this rate, every man that hath once entertained an error, and a falſe religion, muſt for ever continue in it. For if he be not allowed to examine it, he can never have reaſon to change; and to make a change without reaſon, is certainly unreaſonable, and mere vanity and inconſtancy.

And yet, for ought I can ſee, this is the principle which the church of Rome doth with great zeal and earneſtneſs inculcate upon their people; diſcouraging all doubts and enquiries about their religion, as temptations of the devil; and all examinations of the grounds and reaſons of their religion, as an inclination and dangerous ſtep towards hereſy. For what elſe can they mean, by taking the ſcriptures out of the hands of the people, and locking them up from them in an unknown tongue; by requiring them ab-

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ſolutely to ſubmit their judgments, and to reſign them up to that which they are pleaſed to call the catholick church, and implicitly to believe as ſhe believes, tho' they know not what that is? This is, in truth, to believe as their prieſt tells them; for that is all the teaching part of the church, and all the rule of faith that the common people are acquainted with.

And it is not ſufficient to ſay in this matter, that when men are in the truth, and of the right religion, and in the boſom of the true church, they ought to reſt ſatisfied, and to examine and enquire no farther. For this is manifeſtly unreaſonable, and that upon theſe three accounts.

1. Becauſe this is a plain and ſhameful begging of the thing in queſtion; and that which every church, and every religion doth almoſt with equal confidence pretend to; that theirs is the only right religion, and the only true church. And theſe pretences are all alike reaſonable to him that never examined the grounds of any of them, nor hath compared them together. And therefore it is the vaineſt thing in the world for the church of Rome to pretend, that all religions in the world ought to be examined, but theirs; becauſe theirs, and none elſe, is the true religion. For this which they ſay ſo confidently of it, that it is the true religion, no man can know till he hath examined it, and ſearched into the grounds of it, and hath conſidered the objections which are againſt it. So that it is fond partiality to ſay, that their religion is not to be examined by the people that profeſs it, but that all other religions

ligions ought to be examined, or rather, becauſe they are different from that which they preſume to be the only true religion, ought to be condemned at all adventures, without any farther enquiry: this, I ſay, is fond partiality; becauſe every religion and every church may (for ought that appears to any man that is not permitted to examine things impartially) ſay the ſame for themſelves, and with as much Reaſon; and if ſo, then either every religion ought to permit it ſelf to be examined; or elſe no man ought to examine his own religion, whatever it be; and conſequently jews, and turks, and heathens, and hereticks, ought all to continue as they are, and none of them to change; becauſe they cannot reaſonably change, without examining both that religion which they leave, and that which they embrace inſtead of it. SERM. LVIII.

2. Admitting this pretence were true, that they are the true church, and have the true religion; this is ſo far from being a reaſon why they ſhould not permit it to be examined, that, on the contrary, it is one of the beſt reaſons in the world, why they ſhould allow it to be examined, and why they may ſafely ſuffer it to be ſo. They ſhould permit it to be tried, that men may upon good reaſon be ſatisfied that it is the true religion: and they may ſafely ſuffer it to be done; becauſe, if they be ſure that the grounds of their religion be firm and good, I am ſure they will be never the worſe for being examined and look'd into. But I appeal to every man's reaſon, whether it be not an ill ſign that they are not ſo ſure that the grounds of their religion are ſolid and firm, and ſuch as will abide the trial, that they are ſo very loth to have

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have them ſearched into and examined? This cannot but tempt a wiſe man to ſuſpect, that their church is not founded upon a rock; and that they themſelves know ſomething that is amiſs in their religion, which makes them ſo loth to have it tried, and brought to the touch.

3. It is certain among all chriſtians, that the doctrine preached by the apoſtles was the true faith of CHRIST; and yet they never forbad the chriſtians to examine whether it was ſo or not: nay, on the contrary, they frequently exhort them to try and examine their religion, and whether that doctrine which they had delivered to them was the true faith of CHRIST. So St. Paul, 2 Corinth. xiii. 5. "examine yourſelves, whether ye be in the faith; "prove your own ſelves." And again, 1 Theſ. v. 21. "prove all things, hold faſt that which is good;" intimating to us, that in order to the holding faſt the profeſſion of our faith, it is requiſite to prove and try it. And ſo likewiſe St. John's Ep. 1. iv. 1. be- "loved, believe not every ſpirit, but try the ſpirits "whether they are of GOD; becauſe many falſe "prophets are gone out into the world." And he gives a very notable mark, whereby we may know the ſpirit of truth, and the ſpirit of error. The ſpirit of error carries on a worldly intereſt and deſign; and the doctrines of it tend to ſecular power and greatneſs; verſe 5. "they are of the world; "therefore ſpeak they of the world, and the world "heareth them." Act. xvii. 11. St. Luke commends it as an argument of a more noble and generous ſpirit in the Bereans, that they examined the doctrine which

which the apoſtles preach'd. " whether it were agree- SERM.
" able to the ſcriptures;" and this without diſpa- LVIII.
ragement to their infallibility, " theſe, ſaith he, were
" more noble than thoſe of Theſſalonica, in that
" they received the word with all readineſs of mind,
" and ſearceded the ſcriptures daily, whether thoſe
" things were ſo." They were ready to receive the word; but not blindly, and with an implicit faith, but uſing due care to examine the doctrines which they were taught, and to ſee if they were agreeable to that divine revelation of the holy ſcriptures which they had before received. It ſeems they were not willing to admit and ſwallow contradictions in their faith. And we deſire no more of the church of Rome, than that they would encourage the people " to ſearch the ſcriptures daily," and to examine whether their doctrines be according to them. We would be glad to hear the pope and a general council commend to the people the ſearching of the ſcriptures; and to try their definitions of faith and decrees of worſhip by that rule, to ſee whether what they have defined, and decreed to be believed and practiſed, be agreeable to it; their worſhip of Images; their ſolemn invocation of angels, and of the bleſſed virgin, and the ſaints departed; the ſacrament under one kind only; the publick prayers and ſervice of GOD in an unknown tongue; the frequent repetition of the propitiatory ſacrifice of CHRIST's body and blood in the maſs. Had the Bereans been at the council of Trent, and pleaded their right " to ſearch the ſcrip-
" tures, whether theſe things were ſo," I doubt, they would have been thought very troubleſome and imperti-

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impertinent, and would not have been praiſed by the pope and council for their pains, as they are by St. Luke.

You ſee then, upon the whole matter, that it is a very groundleſs and ſuſpicious pretence of the church of Rome, that becauſe they are infallibly in the right, and theirs is the true religion, therefore their people muſt not be permitted to examine it. The doctrine of the apoſtles was undoubtedly the true faith of CHRIST; and yet they not only permitted the people to examine it, but exhorted and encouraged them ſo to do, and commended them for it: and any man, that hath the ſpirit of a man, muſt abhor to ſubmit to this ſlavery, not to be allowed to examine his religion, and to enquire freely into the grounds and reaſons of it; and would break with any church in the world upon this ſingle point; and would tell them plainly, if your religion be too good to be examined, I doubt it is too bad to be believed.

If it be ſaid, that the allowing of this liberty is the way to make people perpetually doubting and unſettled; I do utterly deny this, and do on the contrary with good reaſon affirm, that it is apt to have the contrary effect; there being in reaſon no better way to eſtabliſh any man in the belief of any thing, than to let him ſee that there are very good grounds and reaſons for what he believes; which no man can ever ſee, that is not permitted to examine whether there be ſuch reaſons or not. So that, beſides the reaſonableneſs of the thing, it is of great benefit and advantage to us; and that upon theſe accounts.

1. To

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1. To arm us againſt ſeducers. He that hath examined his religion, and tried the grounds of it, is moſt able to maintain them, and make them good againſt all aſſaults that may be made upon us, to move us from our ſtedfaſtneſs: whereas he that hath not examined, and conſequently does not underſtand the reaſons of his religion, is liable "to be toſſed to and "fro, and to be carried about with every wind of "doctrine, by the ſleight of men, and the cunning "craftineſs of thoſe that lie in wait to deceive." For when he is attempted, he will either defend his religion, or not: if he undertake the defence of it before he hath examined the grounds of it, he makes himſelf an eaſy prey to every crafty man that will ſet upon him; he expoſeth at once himſelf to danger, and his religion to diſgrace: if he decline the defence of it, he muſt be forced to take ſanctuary in that ignorant and obſtinate principle, that becauſe he is of an infallible church, and ſure that he is in the right, therefore he never did nor will examine whether he be ſo or not. But how is he, or can he be ſure that he is in the right; if he have no other reaſon for it, but his confidence, and his being "wiſer in his own conceit, than ſeven "men that can render a reaſon?" It is a ſhameful thing in a wiſe man, who is able to give a good reaſon of all other actions and parts of his life, to be able to ſay nothing for his religion, which concerns him more than all the reſt.

2. To examine and underſtand the grounds of our religion, will be a good means (by the aſſiſtance of God's grace) to keep us conſtant to it,

8.

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even under the fiery trial. When it comes to this, that a man muſt ſuffer for his religion, he had need to be well eſtabliſhed in the belief of it; which no man can ſo well be, as he that in ſome meaſure underſtands the grounds and reaſons of his belief. A man would be well aſſured of the truth and goodneſs of that for which he would lay down his life; otherwiſe he dies as a fool dies, he knows not for what. A man would be loth to ſet ſuch a ſeal to a blank, I mean to that which he hath no ſufficient ground and reaſon to believe to be true; which, whether he hath or not, no man that hath not examined the grounds of his religion can be well aſſured of. This St. Peter preſcribes, as the beſt preparative for ſuffering for righteouſneſs ſake, the firſt epiſtle of Peter, iii. 14, 15. "but if ye ſuffer for righteouſneſs ſake, happy are "ye; and be not afraid of their terror, neither "be troubled; but ſanctify the LORD GOD in your "hearts; (that is, make him the great object of "your dread and truſt) and be ready always to "give an anſwer to every man that asketh you a "reaſon of the hope that is in you."

Secondly, "the holding faſt the profeſſion of "our faith without wavering," doth not imply, that men ſhould obſtinately refuſe to hear any reaſon againſt that religion which they have embraced, and think to be the true religion. As men ſhould examine before they chooſe; ſo after they have choſen, they ſhould be ready to be better informed, if better reaſon can be offered. No man ought to think himſelf ſo infallible as to be privileged from

hearing

hearing reaſon, and from having his doctrines and dictates tried by that teſt. SERM. LVIII.

Our bleſſed SAVIOUR himſelf, the moſt infallible perſon that ever was in the world, and "who "declared the truth which he had heard of GOD," yet he offered himſelf and his doctrine to this trial. John viii. 46. "which of you convinceth me of "ſin?" that is, of falſhood and error? "and if I "ſpeak the truth, why do ye not believe me?" he was ſure he ſpake the truth; and yet for all that, if they could convince him of error and miſtake, he was ready to hear any reaſon they could bring to that purpoſe. Though a man be never ſo ſure that he is in the true religion, and never ſo reſolved to continue conſtant and ſtedfaſt in it; yet reaſon is always to be heard, when it is fairly offered. And as we ought always to be "ready to give an anſwer to "thoſe who ask a reaſon of the hope and faith that "is in us;" ſo ought we likewiſe to be ready to hear the reaſons which others do fairly offer againſt our opinion and perſuaſion in religion, and to debate the matter with them; that if we be in the right, and they in the wrong, we may rectify their miſtake, "and inſtruct them in meekneſs, if "GOD peradventure may give them repentance to "the acknowledgment of the truth."

We are not only to examine our religion, before we peremptorily fix upon it; but after we are, as we think upon the beſt reaſon, eſtabliſh'd and ſettled in it. Tho' we ought not to doubt and waver in our religion upon every ſlight and trifling objection that can be brought againſt it; yet we

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ought always to have an ear open to hear reaſon, and conſider any thing of weight and moment that can be offered to us about it. For it is a great diſparagement to truth, and argues a diſtruſt of the goodneſs of our cauſe and religion, to be afraid to hear what can be ſaid againſt it; as if truth were ſo weak, that in every conflict it were in danger to be baffled and run down, and go by the worſt; and as if the reaſons that could be brought againſt it, were too hard for it, and not to be encounter'd by thoſe forces which truth has on its ſide.

We have that honeſt confidence of the goodneſs of our cauſe and religion, that we do not fear what can be ſaid againſt it; and therefore we do not forbid our people to examine the objections of our adverſaries, and to read the beſt books they can write againſt it. But the church of Rome are ſo wiſe in their generation, that they will not permit thoſe of their communion to hear or read what can be ſaid againſt them: nay, they will not permit the people the uſe of the holy ſcriptures, which they, with us, acknowledge to be at leaſt an eſſential part of the rule of faith. They tell their people, that after they are once of their church and religion, they ought not to hear any reaſons againſt it; and though they be never ſo ſtrong, they ought not to entertain any doubt concerning it; becauſe all doubting is a temptation of the devil, and a mortal ſin. But ſurely that church is not to be heard, which will not hear reaſon; nor that religion to be much admired, which will not allow thoſe that have once embrac'd it, to hear it ever after debated and examined.

mined. This is a very ſuſpicious buſineſs, and ar- SERM. LVIII.
gues, that either they have not truth on their ſide; or that truth is a weak, and pitiful, and ſneaking thing, and not able to make its party good againſt error.

I ſhould now have proceeded in the ſecond place, to ſhew poſitively what is implied, "in holding faſt "the profeſſion of our faith without wavering;" and then to have conſidered the argument and encouragement hereto, "becauſe he is faithful that "promiſed." But I ſhall proceed no farther at this time.

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